NOTICE TO READERS. When you finish reading this magazine place a one cent stamp alongside of this notice, hand same to any postal employe, and it will be placed in the hands of our soldiers or sailors at the front. *No wrapping—no address.* A. S. BURLESON, *Postmaster-General.*

The Black Cat

April 1918

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Clever · Short · Stories

THE MAGAZINE FOR YOUR READING TABLE

Former United States Senator Mason, Pioneer

in Pure Food and Drug Legislation, Father of Rural Free Delivery System

Says Nuxated Iron

Increased His Power and Endurance so Much, That He Feels It Ought to Be Made Known to Every Nervous, Run-down, Anaemic Man, Woman, and Child.

Opinions of Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author; Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly Physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.) New York and others.

Former United States Senator Wm. E. Mason, recently elected Member of the U. S. Congress from Illinois

WHAT SENATOR MASON SAYS:

"I have often said I would never recommend medicine of any kind. I believe that the doctor's place. However, after the hardest political campaign of my life, without a chance for a vacation, I had been starting to court every morning with that horrible tired feeling one cannot describe. I was advised to try Nuxated Iron. As a pioneer in the pure food and drug legislation, I was at first loath to try an advertised remedy, but after advising with one of my medical friends, I gave it a test. The results have been so beneficial in my own case I made up my mind to let my friends know about it, and you are at liberty to publish this statement if you so desire. **I am now sixty-five years of age, and I feel that a remedy which will build up the strength and increase the power of endurance of a man of my age should be made known to every nervous, run-down, anæmic man, woman and child.**"

Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron was shown to several physicians who were requested to give their opinion thereon.

"Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York Physician and Medical Author, said: "I heartily endorse Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron. There can be no vigorous iron men without iron. Pallor means anæmia. Anæmia means iron deficiency. The skin of anæmic men and women is pale, the flesh flabby; the muscles lack tone; the brain fags, and the memory fails, and often they become weak, nervous, despondent and melancholy."

Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.) New York, and the Westchester County Hospital, said, "Senator Mason is to be commended on handling out this statement on Nuxated Iron for public print. There are thousands of men and women who need a strength and blood builder but do not know what to take. In my own opinion there is nothing better than organic iron—Nuxated Iron for enriching the blood and helping to increase the strength and endurance of men and women who burn up too rapidly their nervous energy in the strenuous strain of the great business competition of the day."

"Former Health Commissioner Kerr of the City of Chicago, says: "From my own experience with Nuxated Iron I feel it is such a valuable remedy that it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician in this country."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston Physician who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said; "Senator Mason is right. As I have said a hundred times over, I regard organic iron as the greatest of all strength builders. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without being tired. Next, take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while increase their strength and endurance in from ten to fourteen days' time while taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been going on for months without getting benefit from anything. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance which comes from having plenty of iron in the blood; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Senator Mason's championship of Pure Food and Drugs legislation, his fight for the rural free delivery system, and his strong advocacy of all bills favoring labor and the rights of the masses, as against trusts and combines, made him a national figure at Washington and endeared him to the hearts of the working man and the great masses of people throughout the United States. Senator Mason has the distinction of being one of the really big men of the nation. His strong endorsement of Nuxated Iron must convince any intelligent thinking reader that it must be a preparation of very great merit and one which the Senator feels is bound to be of great value to the masses of people everywhere, otherwise he could not afford to lend his name to it, especially after his strong advocacy of pure food and drugs legislation.

Since Nuxated Iron has obtained such an enormous sale—over three million people using it annually—other iron preparations are often recommended as a substitute for it. The reader should remember that there is a vast difference between ordinary metallic iron and the organic iron contained in Nuxated Iron, therefore always insist on having Nuxated Iron.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron which was used by Senator Mason with such surprising results and which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and highly satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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The Black Cat

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Out of their Own Mouths

THEY

ARE CONDEMNED

Here is a protest of a German soldier, an eye-witness of the slaughter of Russian soldiers:

"It was frightful, heartrending, as these masses of human beings were driven to destruction. Above the terrible thunder of cannon could be heard the heartrending cries of the Russians: 'O Prussians! O Prussians!'—but there was no mercy. Our captain had ordered: 'The whole lot must die; so rapid fire.'"

It is only because our French and British allies have held the line that such horrors have not been witnessed in New England.

The Third Liberty Loan
lets you help defeat barbarism

SAVE TO BUY

LIBERTY LOAN COMMITTEE
Liberty Building, Boston

THE BLACK CAT CLUB

THE twenty-five dollar prize for the best story in the January BLACK CAT, determined by vote of the club members, was awarded to Chart Pitt, author of *The Brotherhood of the Hills*. Prizes for criticisms were awarded to the following persons, in the order named: Miss Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; L. S. Hutchens, Baileysville, W. Va.; Miss Mary E. Sullivan, Oak Park, Ill.; Erwin H. Spillane, Akron, Ohio; G. Lombard Kelly, Augusta, Ga.; Miss Lelia E. Davis, Richmond, Va.; John J. Leary, Chicago, Ill.; A. J. Marcus, Atlantic City, N. J.; Mrs. Edna Willard, San Diego, Cal. Stories are criticised in the order of their standing in the contest.

The Brotherhood of the Hills is the story of a man incapable of combating the correlated forces of human nature, of a man with an angry mind and a hungry heart, whose unhappy life is a powerful argument against the dullness and stupidity of misery brought on by self-pity. The gloomy picture presented in the first half of the story is greatly relieved by the vivid scenes which follow, and the intensity of the dramatic action from the crisis to the close more than makes up for lack of action earlier in the story. A single chief character, Tom Lawley, is carried through the predominating incident, his first visit to town in forty years, to a well arranged crisis, his meeting with his successful rival at the stable and the development of a new situation when he learns that the mine promotors are riding to relocate his enemy's mine. Then follows the thrilling, climatic race when he and his horse go tearing across a waste of stubble and jagged rocks, during which the inner man in Tom Lawley becomes fully awakened to the tragedy of allowing the black despair of hatred and lust to win out against him. His final act of relocating the mine in the name of Mona Garret, the wife of his rival, reveals the brotherhood of the hills and very nearly exemplifies the twelfth chapter of Romans. One might wish for a closer view of Mona Garret. For one who unconsciously exercises so strong an influence on the main character, her obscurity in the picture is perhaps a defect. It is a quiet story, action to the contrary notwithstanding, and one that leaves a deeper impression of Lawley's barren existence than it does of his act of brotherhood revealed in the dénouement. Like *The Law of the Abalone*, a previous prize winning story by the same author, it is very strongly a story of setting; and it is superior to that story in at least one respect—it is pleasantly sad, while the latter's effect is picturesque ugliness.

Tom Lawley's faithfulness to one woman would upset Auntie Miller's theorem, expounded so entertainingly in *When A Man Wearies*, if she did not have Henry and Norman for Exhibits A and B. To those of us who dwell in the cities, these two gentlemen are convincing characters of everyday life. We can not imagine them moping around for twenty years, or twenty minutes for that matter, in a world full of women. Even if they grew up in Tom Lawley's surroundings, we would hardly expect them to wait forty years before going to town to see what they could see. Unlike the bear who took it into his head to travel, they would probably see something more than the other side of the mountain. In this bit of *Comédie Humaine*, Auntie proceeds on the assumption that a woman can hold her husband's affections if she will only take the trouble to combine the virtues of the good wife with the dainty, alluring ways of the "other woman" who wants him. Her vivacious, worldly-wise, womanly-tender observations, as she goes about her business, are witty without savoring of malice. She excuses while she accuses, and so takes all the sting from her charges, until even the men enjoy her revelations of their weaknesses. Her attitude toward Henry is a delicious bit of human nature. Although called in as a specialist in other people's affairs, she never forgets him. Her foreign policy does very well at home, and her constant vigilance keeps his affections at par. Even now, when the dollar is worth only about seventy-four cents, the lesson she teaches holds good, for soap and elbow grease are not altogether prohibitory in price, while love and the desire to please remain at the old quotations. Having read *Every Man*, by the same author, one cannot but remark the sameness of the two. The plot is a bit changed; there are three new characters. But the problem presented and the solution given are identical.

A well known writer of short stories protests that her most famous production is not a really good story because it is not true to life. If this failing makes a poor story, *The Elopement of King Nebuchadnezzar* is a poor one, for it presents a picture not altogether truthful inasmuch as it is patterned after a certain school of

(*Continued on page* 44)

PETER GRIMWOOD GOES TO WAR

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

Peter Grimwood couldn't go to war. The law wouldn't let him. He had a dependent wife—with a weak heart. "Boys," he said, "I wish I could go; I'd have enlisted long ago. By gosh, I'd like to go."

PETER Grimwood's wife was waiting for him when he reached home. She was a buxom individual, with a rotund countenance that ought to have shed joy and happiness all the year round. As it was, however, she had the appearance of being merely very fat and very much annoyed.

"Grandpa's waiting for you, up in his room!" she exclaimed, as one who speaks in sudden fitfulness of temper. "He's been waiting for you since you went out. I've been getting it all day; he's like a crazy man—talking to himself—"

"He—ain't going to make his will?" ventured Peter, hopefully.

"No such luck," returned Peter's joyful spouse. "I thought maybe he was goin' to die. It'd be a blessing if he did."

"Not before he makes his will," returned Peter firmly. "There's no use of Steve getting anything of his. Haven't we taken care of the old idiot for the last ten years, I'd like to know—"

A voice from above, an old man's voice, interrupted him.

"Peter, I want that you should come and talk to me."

An old man's voice, true, but it had a sudden strength and thrill to it that made his grandson start. So much so, indeed, that the latter came near to committing the indiscretion of immediate obedience.

"A'right," he returned, "I'm coming. Keep your shirt on, will you."

Eventually he reached the sole room in the sprawling, ramshackle cottage that was devoted to the use of Peter Grimwood, the elder. Peter Grimwood had his shirt on, was fully clad, in fact, even to an old gray hat that adorned his head, even to a heavy walking stick that he clutched firmly in his long, lean, withered hand. He was limping up and down his room.

"What's eatin' you?" queried his grandson, in a pleasing tone of voice that matched his words.

"If you hadn't come," quavered the old man, "I'd a-gone downtown myself. Thank God you've come, Peter! Or I'd a-gone downtown myself."

"What for?" queried Peter, quite indifferently. His indifference, however, was but skin deep. He had never seen the old man in a state of excitement like this.

The old man tapped a black sheet-iron box that stood upon a table. "I'll tell you what for, Peter," he shrilled exultantly, "I'll tell you what for—to turn my ploughshares into swords."

He stumped up and down the room waving his left hand in the air.

"To turn my ploughshares into swords!" he exclaimed once more.

"Shakespeare," gurgled his grandson, a bit nervously. And then he added, "Where'd you get that dope?"

"Heard it in the market place nigh onto sixty years ago," returned the senior, "heard it here in town. 'Turn your ploughshares into swords.' I didn't do it, Peter. I never had a sword. I didn't turn my ploughshare into a sword—not then." He tapped the box, once more. "I'm going to do it now."

Peter junior, who never stood up when he could sit down or lie down, had been lounging on the bed. Now he sprang to his feet, startled.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded.

The old man opened the small iron box.

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He took out a timeworn blue linen envelope. "Peter," he said, "I want that you should take my Tri-State stock and sell it —sell it all."

"You're crazy," exclaimed his grandson, "this is no time to sell stocks. What d'you mean, sell all your stock?"

The old man tapped the open box with renewed vigor. "Peter," he cried, "I want that you should sell my Tri-State stock for me, and get the cash. And with the cash I want that you should buy me Liberty Bonds. It's not for you, it's not for me that I'm thinking—it's for the gov'ment. It's for the gov'ment, and I want the gov'ment to borrow off of me every thing I've got."

Peter junior stared at him. "You mean to say," he exclaimed, "that you're going to sink over fifty thousand dollars into the Liberty Loan?"

The old man nodded. "Turn your ploughshares into swords," he repeated vigorously.

Peter stepped to the door. "Vangie," he cried, "Vangie, d'ye hear me? Come up here."

Vangie, who had been listening below, came with all the agility at her command, borne on the wings of a devouring curiosity.

"Vangie!" exclaimed the younger man as his better half bounded into the room, "What do you think he's going to do? He's going to sell his Tri-State stock! You know what it pays—six per cent—once it paid him eight. And he's going to buy Liberty Bonds. And he thinks I'm crazy enough to do it for him, too."

Vangie, her arms akimbo, chewed gum assiduously. She stared in pity—assumed pity—at the old man.

"You poor boob," she said at length.

The old man waved his stick in the air. "I was a poor boob until now," he cried. "Listen, Peter, Vangie. 'Turn your ploughshares into swords.' I heard it in the market place fifty years ago. I was young and strong then, like Peter here—"

"I'm not young and strong," returned Peter, narrowing his chest.

"I had a pretty wife like you," went on the old man, shaking his stick at Vangie.

Vangie followed her husband's lead. "I'm not—" she began. Thinking it over, she changed tactics. "Yes, go on," she commanded.

"I heard 'em call for me," quavered the old man, his breath coming fast, "and I didn't go. And they came for me. And I didn't go. I bought a fellow to go in my place. I knew him well. I paid three hundred dollars for him. And he went in my place. And he was killed. I stayed home with my good-looking wife—and I made some money out of the war. Three hundred dollars—blood money. He was killed, he was killed at Gettysburg." He raised his cane in air and brought it down, ringing, on the iron box. "I've got no sword, no gun, no cartridge belt; and they won't lay flowers on top of me on Decoration Day. There was nobody of the name of Grimwood went from this here town to war. But there will be now, if I have my way. Peter," he implored, "Peter, your name is Grimwood. I want that you should volunteer."

His grandson met his eyes for but one instant. The old man's gaze burned into him. Then the younger man, with a shrug of his shoulders, turned to his wife.

"Nutty," he remarked. "Huh," he added, "volunteer! Didn't I register last Tuesday? What more d'ye want, I'd like to know?"

"I want," said the old man solemnly, "that a Grimwood should volunteer. There's part of me in you, Peter. My blood's runnin' in your veins. I want to see you go to war."

"Huh," interposed Vangie, "Peter ain't going to war. They can't make Peter go to war, let alone volunteer."

"Why not?" queried the old man. "He's strong and hearty, he's a good man to go to war. They'll take him."

"They'll not take him," responded the lady with the air of one who had settled the question long ago, "he's got a dependent wife—with a weak heart."

Peter had rubbed that into the officials at the polls when he registered. He had even made a little speech to the youngsters in the line. "Boys," he had said sadly, on that occasion, "I wish I could go—

I'd have enlisted long ago. But the law won't let me. I've got a dependent wife —with a weak heart. That's how I'm fixed. By gosh, I'd like to go!"

Grandfather Grimwood sadly shook his head. "I was afraid it'd be like that," he sighed, "but I c'n do what I c'n do. I'll turn my ploughshares into swords..."

"And," he added, shrilly, "if you won't help me do it, by the Lord, I'll do it myself—you c'n watch me, Peter! I want that you..."

His grandson glanced once more at his wife. There was a strength of purpose in the old man's attitude and voice that baffled them.

"Simply nutty," repeated Peter junior.

"I'll turn these over to you," went on his grandfather, holding out the envelope, "and you can do the rest."

"You'll have to endorse 'em first," suggested Peter. He worked in a bank and knew about stocks.

"I'll endorse 'em over to you," quavered the old man, pleased to have his grandson acquiesce.

"You can endorse 'em in—" began Peter junior. Then he stopped. "You can endorse 'em over to me," he corrected. He had been on the point of saying that they could be endorsed in blank. Then he went on. "There's red tape—not much. We'll have to have a witness."

"Get one right away," shrilled his senior, "I—I cant wait."

Peter Grimwood Jr. was a rapid thinker. He glanced meaningly at his wife; his glance meant, "Follow me." He turned back to his grandfather. "I'll get old Squires, the notary," he said. "He'll do."

"Yes—yes," eagerly responded his grandfather, "he had a gun once. He'll be glad to know I'm favorin' the gov'ment."

"Humph," said Peter junior, as he left the room.

Vangie followed him downstairs. Behind closed doors they telephoned, not to old Squires, but to a young squirt, a friend of Peter junior's. The young squirt came.

"Stacy," said Peter junior, "no matter what happens, I want to have you keep this under your hat. All you got to do is to witness the signature and figure that the old man's in his right mind. If he wants to do a fool thing we've got to let him do it. The money's his—that's all there's to it, Stacy."

The old man, silent and depressed in the presence of this dapper young stranger, signed his name, and acknowledged his signature. It was clear that he understood the nature of his act. Stacy made a note of the circumstance at Peter junior's request, and the incident was closed. A week later Peter junior brought in the Liberty Loan bonds for his grandfather's inspection. The old man counted them over and caressed them with unwonted tenderness in his eyes. He gloated over them.

"What money I made out of the mill," he murmured, "that goes to war. I've turned my ploughshares into swords."

Peter junior interrupted him. "Now, Grandpop," he explained, "we've got to be sensible about this thing. These bonds are negotiable and payable to bearer. If you lose 'em, good night shirt. The Tri-State stock was different. It was payable to you and you were the holder on the books. It could've burned up and done no harm. But an iron box under your bed—and burglars thick as flies around here! It ain't safe. You get that, don't you? Think about it for awhile. They've got to go into one of our small safes at the bank, or in a safe deposit box, that's all. You can't keep fifty thousand odd dollars cash, for its practically that, under your bed. I'm telling everybody that you've bought these bonds—."

"That's it," cried the old man, "let 'em know."

Vangie crowded in between them hastily and with unwonted gentleness of manner.

"There, Grandpop," she cried, patting him on the shoulder, and chewing lustily upon her favorite brand, "you can rest easy. You've done your bit."

One evening a week later, while the three were eating supper, the old man suddenly laid his napkin down alongside his plate, and rose and stumped to the window, and peered off into the distance.

"What's ailin' you, Grandpop?" cried Vangie, a bit testily. "Why can't you set still and eat?"

"I can't set still," echoed the old man, peering into the distance. "I'm thinkin' of Lomax. I bought him for three hundred dollars; and he's a young man yet, lying up there on the hillside, he's a young man yet. And I'm old, old. And there ain't no Grimwood ever left this town to go to war..."

There was a hurried ring at the doorbell. Vangie, with a glance at her husband, left the room, carefully closing the door behind her. At the front door she confronted a tall, bronzed youth, a bit rakish and devil-may-care in appearance—and some one else. The someone else was a pretty girl.

"Steve!" exclaimed Vangie, sharply. Then she added, "What're you doin' here?"

"Bad penny, y'know," began Steve. He stopped. The laughter died out of his face. Vangie, standing in the doorway seemed like living vengeance. Her eyes glared anathema. Steve was cowed. The girl with him shrank behind him and clutched at his sleeve.

"Came to see Grandpop," Steve said finally.

"He won't see you," snapped Vangie.

"Why?" wailed Steve. "I—I came miles to see him before..."

"Oh," snapped Vangie, "he ain't goin' to die. He's as fit as ever. And he's a regular spitfire. He won't see you—that's flat. The last time you ran away—that was the straw that broke the camel's back."

"Come on, Steve," pleaded the girl, "we're not wanted here."

Steve turned to the girl. He put his arm around her. "Never you mind, Nellie," he said, "this is one of those things that's got to be done. He's my grandpop and I've got to see him. Cousin Vangie," he went on with unusual firmness in his tone, "I've got to see Grandpop if only for five minutes. Then I'll go away for good. I'll never bother him again. Don't make any mistake, Cousin Vangie," he continued, "I've got to see him. That's all."

"I'll ask him," Cousin Vangie said finally, "but he won't see you—that I know."

She closed the door upon them and went back to the dining room.

"Grandpop," she said, in withering tones, "Steve's outside—with one of his women friends. He only comes here when he's got no other place to go. And with a woman, too! Insolence! You won't see him, of course—"

Peter junior sprang to his feet. "Of course," he repeated after his wife, "of course you won't."

The old man's eyes glittered. "He's my grandson," he quavered, "he's your cousin, Peter. I've never yet refused to see him. Why should I? I want to see him, he's my own flesh and blood. He's—he's a Grimwood. I must see him. Bring him in."

They brought him in. Steve came in, his arm around the girl.

"Grandpop," cried Steve, catching the old man about the shoulders, "this is Nellie-girl. This is my little wife."

The old man caught him by the arm. "It's good to see you, Steve, it's good to see you. Where you been? What's kept you? You—you never come to see me. And I'm your grandpop, too."

"Never come to see you?" echoed Steve, in wonderment. "Why..."

Vangie pounced down upon the girl. She didn't even pause to note the presence of the wedding ring upon the girl's left hand. Quick action was imperative.

"Pleased to meet you," she murmured to the girl, "and I only hope you can keep Steve straight."

"Straight!" echoed the girl. "Steve's the straightest man I know. Straight..."

"Nellie, Grandpop," shouted Steve. "Little Nellie-girl and I—we just got married, Grandpop, just got married, just the other day."

The old man beckoned to the girl. She came. He searched her face. The clatter of conversation had confused him. He looked into her eyes. He turned to Vangie, puzzled.

"You—you said this woman was a..." He tapped the table insistently. "She—she's true blue. I know," he cried, glaring at Vangie.

Vangie shrugged her shoulders hopelessly. "This is Steve's wife," she explained, "haven't you been told so a hundred times?" Mechanically she set two

places for them at the table. She didn't like the steady, appraising glance of the girl. Her uneasiness forced her to be polite. When they were settled, a slow smile spread over the face of Vangie's husband.

"Steve," he exclaimed, "just when *were* you married, anyway?"

Steve told him. Peter junior rose and consulted a calendar that hung upon the wall. Vangie watched him.

"Hum!" cried Vangie. "Well, you're not the only one who's got married just to dodge the war."

The girl leaped to her feet. Then, remembering herself, she sank back into her chair.

"Steve," she implored.

"It's all right, Nellie-girl," returned Steve, dividing his steady glance between Vangie and her husband. "You see, we got married because we go to war."

"We?" echoed Vangie, not quite cowed as yet.

"Nellie-girl and I," returned Steve. "She goes as a nurse—I go as a private. And—" he looked at the girl with unwonted tenderness in his eyes, "we couldn't go, without—without one week of—of married life. We just couldn't, could we, Nellie-girl?"

The girl held her eyes upon the plate in front of her. "It was the way we—we both felt," she faltered, tremulously. "We'll probably never meet again upon this earth, and..."

Steve groped in his pocket, found what he wanted, and tossed his enlistment papers over to his grandfather. "That's what I came to show you, Grandpop!" he exclaimed. Then he strode round to the other side of the table and caught the girl, still flushing, in his arms.

"We'll make the most of it; by Godfrey, but we will!" he whispered to her.

He was interrupted by the shrill voice of his grandfather. The old man stood at the window, gazing off toward the hill tops, and holding Steve's enlistment papers in his hand.

"Lomax," he cried, "for the first time a Grimwood goes to war. My blood, Steve's got it—it's me, a part of me, that goes to war." He swung about to Vangie. His manner changed. His tone now was the tone of command.

"Steve and his bride stay here all night," he said.

"No!" cried the bride.

"But, Grandpop," wailed Vangie, "we haven't got..."

The voice of a mill owner silenced her, a mill owner giving orders to his hands.

"This is my house," he cried, "tumble-down and worthless as it is, it's my house. Get the spare bedroom ready. Steve and his bride stay here until he's ordered off to war."

The next day, with Steve and his bride, he went downtown and made his will in favor of them both. In the privacy of his bedroom, he had told them of his purpose. They had protested. He had persisted.

"All right, then," Steve had said, "but when we get it, we'll put it into war bonds. They'll be selling more of them, even after..."

"It's all in war bonds now," returned the old man exultantly. "My ploughshares are all turned into swords. But," he added, dropping his voice, "don't tell Peter—don't tell him anything about this will. I want a little peace before I die."

Before Steve was ordered away from the immediate locality, the old man died. He went to apologize to Lomax, the young man who lay up there on the hill.

Steve told his cousin Peter about the will. Peter only shrugged his shoulders.

"This house ain't worth fifteen hundred dollars," remarked Peter, "but it's yours. Vangie and me'll get out any time you say."

"Aren't you—aren't you going to—to fight the will?" gasped Steve.

Peter merely shrugged his shoulders once again.

Steve's counsel offered the will for probate. "I'm afraid," he told Steve, "that your cousin Peter can break this will. Peter's lived with the old man for years, and I've heard that the old fellow got queer in his head before he died, and, by George, he didn't last long after he made this will. There's a good deal to be said on Peter's side, my boy."

"We've got to go right ahead," said Steve. "It's Nellie that I've got to think about. If she comes out of this war alive —I won't, that's pretty sure—I want her to live like the little queen she is. Go on and have a try."

The will was probated. Not once did Peter raise his voice in protest. Steve got his letters as executor and then went to Peter's little four room flat, for he and Vangie had evacuated the tumble-down old place.

"Cousin Pete," said Steve, apologetically, "here's my credentials. Any time convenient, you can hand over that bunch of bonds."

"What bonds?" queried Peter in amazement.

"Grandpop's war loan bonds," gasped Steve. "He said you had 'em for safe keeping."

"Said—what?" demanded Peter.

"Had 'em for safe keeping," faltered Steve.

Peter glanced helplessly at his wife. "Now wouldn't that jar you?" he exclaimed. Then he turned back to Steve and looked him in the eye.

"Why, Steve!" he exclaimed; "what did the old—the old man tell you, anyway?"

Steve repeated the whole story of the bonds just as he'd heard it from the old man's lips. His bride corroborated him in each detail.

Peter listened with growing astonishment. "Well, what d'you know about that?" he demanded.

"Why, my dear Cousin Steve," he went on, "the old man gave me his Tri-State stock—gave it to me. We'd taken care of him for years, Vangie and me." He neglected to state that the old man's income had handsomely eked out Peter's slender earnings, and that the obligation was upon the other foot. "He gave it to me outright. If you don't believe it, go to the fiscal agent of the Tri-State in New York and find out. He'll show you the transfer. Ask Stacy here in town—he knows."

Steve's lawyer followed up these clues Coming back to Steve he shook his head.

"Now, never mind," said Steve, "I'm going to fight. The old man told me the truth—I know it was the truth. And it's for Nellie. I'm going to fight."

He fought. On the witness stand he tried to tell his story, tried to get in evidence the declarations of the old man. But the law stepped in. Death, having sealed the lips of old Peter Grimwood, the law sealed the lips of Steve Grimwood and his young bride, interested parties.

"We're beaten before we start," whispered Steve's counsel to Steve, "but we'll go the limit. We'll plow with the other man's heifer, we'll call Peter and his myrmidons."

Steve's counsel fished—fatally. Stacy, the notary public, could only tell that he had formally witnessed a transfer of the certificates of stock to young Peter Grimwood. The fiscal agent of the Tri-State who had been produced in court by Peter, had the certificates. The transfer to young Peter Grimwood was undoubtedly clear and convincing.

"Whole hog or none," whispered Steve's counsel to Steve. And then he said aloud, "I'll put on Peter Grimwood."

Young Peter took the stand. "*You* tell us about this gift," commanded Steve's counsel.

For just one instant Peter Grimwood glanced appealingly at his own counsel. Peter's counsel rose to his feet.

"This man's testimony isn't competent," he objected. "He's an interested party."

Steve's lawyer smiled. "In the case of this witness the executor can do what he couldn't do in his own case. The executor waives the prohibition of the statute. This man must testify."

Peter testified, very clearly and convincingly. His grandfather had given him the stock in consideration of the tender, gentle care afforded the old man by Peter junior and his delicate, but affectionate wife, Evangeline. Of course, his will operated only on what was left—the homestead. Steve was welcome to that, why not?

"Why," persisted counsel, "did you keep the fact a secret that you had invested the proceeds of the sale of this stock in Liberty Loan bonds."

Peter snorted with indignation. He detested publicity. There was no reason why

his townfolk should pat him on the back for his patriotism, no reason why his name should head the list of Liberty Loan buyers here. He had therefore bought the bonds over in New York. He had kept them ever since in his pigeon hole in one of the small safes at the bank.

"I consider," he added, "that they constitute the safest investment that I ever made."

There was a little murmur of applause. The local newsmen noted the remark. It was the slogan of a patriot.

Steve's counsel turned to Steve. "Beaten to a frazzle," he remarked aloud.

The next morning at the bank, two of Peter Grimwood's young associates wrung him by the hand.

"Peter, old scout," they cried, "you ought to be glad and proud. We read all about it in the papers. Remember your little speech at the polls last June? This makes your wife independent—fixes her for life, in case you croak. Thank God, Pete, at last you go to war!"

Peter blanched. "Yes—yes," he faltered, "I—I didn't think of that. Yes, yes. At last—at last," he gulped, "I go—I go—to war."

Thinking it over, with the sweat pouring from his brow, he came to the unalterable conclusion that a man cannot eat his cake and have it too.

He gritted his teeth. "That damned son of a gun, Steve," he said to himself. "If he hadn't made it public... if he hadn't gone to court, if I'd only thought... I could have settled with him... pin head that I am..."

It was too late. Peter Grimwood's face was set, very much set, towards war.

In September, after Peter had left for his cantonment, Vangie hailed Peter's former counsel as he passed her modest apartment. She was sitting on the stone steps of the apartment house, fanning herself. The lawyer, who was a widower and quite impecunious, sat down beside her.

"Well," exclaimed Vangie Grimwood, "nobody can say the *we're* not patriotic! All we had we invested in the Liberty Loan; and now, Peter, like a man, has gone to war."

"Gone to war," echoed the man of law.

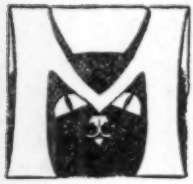
Glancing sidewise at Vangie, the counselor wondered, whether, in case of Peter's sudden and abrupt demise abroad, whether it would be a wise move on his own part to take the avoirdupois that sat beside him, in view of the troy weight that would go with it in the shape of Liberty Loan bonds.

FOR MAY: THE WATCHERS OF THE WILD *by Chart Pitt.* The young superintendent of a string of cannery stations battles with seemingly endless miles of stormy waters to relieve the distress of the men watching the property of the canning company. And then, because he has had more than he could stand of hog-wallowing and his nerves are on edge, he allows the supplies to be carried off by the surf, and does not discover the loss until after the schooner has departed. So he is left to the companionship of the only remaining watcher, a half-starved, half-crazed man who babbles incessantly about the bleached bones out on the hillside—the bones of those who have come before.

CUPID'S GOSLING

BY GEORGE GILBERT

M. La Beouf's one suit is far from being a thing of beauty and a joy forever. Its loveliness decreases with each successive pressing, and it threatens to sink into nothingness at any minute, leaving him embarrassed and spoiling the golden opportunity.



MONSIEUR has read aright my sign, which says: "Clothes pressed while waiting."

If Monsieur doubts, let him be in the seat, back of the partition, where, in trousers old, but of a cleanliness, if patched, he may comfortable be.

Often do I press the pants, coats, vests of people like this, Monsieur. It is nothing new, in this city of George Washington, that men want clothing pressed while waiting. So many come, to see the President Woodrow, the Secretary Len-sing or the janitor's third assistant, *Département de la Guerre,* about those leetle jobs—*la, la, la!*

So, the seegar puff-puffing, the journal at hand, the rose in my vase that my niece Pauline replenish so well to regard, Monsieur comforts himself in the seat of ease, while I, Paul Poulet, press on.

Observe how one man said, with truth: —" 'Tis the clothes the man that makes."

Ah, but who the clothes makes? The tailor, fine, essential man that he is, architect of mankind! But regard anew: The tailor, making the suit but once, makes the man but once. Then what? Shall the so beautiful a suit, once made, bag at the knee, lose his fine crease, rumple his shoulder padding, which most men need as much as a ballet dancer needs to be padded on the—

But let us not discuss now the opera, the ballet, the arts refine. Rather, to the arts nécessaire, adhere, Monsieur. Let us not pad the—tale—lest it not be acceptable.

To return, then. Scan anew the saying: " 'Tis the clothes the man that makes." To it I beg an amendment to offer, such as: " 'Tis the clothes man that makes—and the presser, the bushelman, that keeps him made."

And I, Paul Poulet, am such a bushelman, repairer, yes, yes.

Mind not that my tongue runs as nimbly as does my goose and my gosling over this wet cloth as the hot iron smooths out the wrinkles. The gosling? The big iron being the goose, this small one that I so deftly use to mold the roll of the collar back into true form, is it not the gosling?

How odd it is, that one half inch of sinking or rising on a man's shoulder, and pouf, pouf—he is made or unmade. Even so, half an inch on one's nose—or off. Ah, the little things of life, they count—matches for the seegar, small coins for the pocket, collar buttons for the shirt, plenty little love words and kisses. But my tongue my story outruns.

Once, where Monsieur sits, sat Aloysius La Beouf, of French Canada, like me. But not a bushelman was he, *ma foi,* but a chauffeur, unplaced. For the Général Botkine, high in Section d'Ordonnance, he aspires to serve, being naturalized.

Says this La Beouf to me: "Regard, Poulet, my condition. The trial of the Service Civil for this place as chauffeur of Général Botkine is one month hence. I am to this one suit reduced, to credit for tobacco and board. The place I must have, to wed the so astounding beauty, Hortense La Grange, of blonde hair, blue eyes, dimples on cheeks and chin, who stenographer is for Général Botkine. To the place and heart I seek aspires also one Michael Brannigan of New York—oaf that he is, strong, masterful, in one good place now and so with plenty of clothing. So always he appears, handsome and correct before that so profoundly perfect Hortense

La Grange. Even my own sister, Marie, here with me, thinks him handsome.

"*Mais,* when I think of that Brannigan, able to ride Hortense in the car he drives for the Colonel Tompkins, while I can walk with her but timidly, at eve, so my shabbiness of suit shows not, I am distraught. And particularly, Poulet, observe my left shoulder, which, uncoated, has the droop *not* militaire. Inside my well made coat, my shoulders have the outward set, the squareness of the man of Mars, like Michael Brannigan's. But outside the coat, alas, to the eye one sags, one is of an elevation. And since I am in this capital of North America, the rain, the mist, the perspiration from your heats, have caused the so finely padded shoulder of my left coatside to crinkle and draw until it deforms me; and this to me spells tragedy, as this Général Botkine, martinet, has said to Hortense that if the Service Civil sends to him a man of the leg bandy, of the eye squint, of the shoulder that sags, he will veto the choice, being able to, the place being confidential in rating. For he will be served by men of the air militaire, Poulet."

So, to sum up, La Beouf has one suit and that to extreme is reduced by moisture and shrinkings and wear. If he passes the test Service Civil, still must he pass the test of Général Botkine, with eyes of eagles. But once on the roll he can not removed be, except on charges. It all rests with the glance, the flashing glance of the optics of Général Botkine. How to win, then?

And this Brannigan? Distant, gruff, he is, but five suits a week I press for him; yet not as a friend, as a money-bag I regard him.

But La Beouf! How his eye sparkles, so mild, how his dark hair curls on his white brow and how fine his voice as he trolls:

"The win' blow beeg on Lac Champlin—
Bimebye he blow some more."

What would you? One must observe the appeals of consanguinity. Did not a famous poet write: "Blood is thicker than gravy?"

In short, I enlist on the side of La Beouf. For Brannigan, I press for vulgar money. For La Beouf, for love, with an artist's love of his work. On the one suit of Aloysius, what miracle did I perform! At once, the first time, I so restored it that he sobbed for joy. And I trust him.

"Ah, *mon ami,* Paul," he breathes, observing himself in the cheval glass, "again I am a man, not a being with two legs and a droop of the shoulder. Let Brannigan beware—also Général Botkine!"

So, swinging his stick and humming "La Belle Fontaine," he goes out.

To my niece, Pauline Carmault, who lives with me, I tell the tale. She, slender, brown of hair and eye, curly of locks, pink and white of cheek, eighteen, fascinating because she does not know how fascinating she is, claps her hands that are so fat where they should be fat and lean where they should be lean, and white and pink all over.

"With more of a particularity, mon Oncle Paul," she pleads, "go over the tale anew. To me it is like romance."

"Regard, Nanette," I say to my wife, "this simpleton who sees romance everywhere. If she should to my shop come with my dinner pail when La Beouf is pressed being, she would at him make eyes, eh?"

Pauline blushes and denies.

Yet, when La Beouf is being pressed a week after, that pretty Pauline does come in with my lunch and a rose for my vase, and goes quick behind the partition, where La Beouf is, in the easy chair, to find some cloth to match a dress she is mending at home. At once she screams to see a man there. Many a man has she seen there, but now she must scream—a pretty, maiden's scream.

"Pouf, Pauline, you have men seen before," I say.

I could no more do than make them acquaint. What harm? He will chauffeur Botkine, wed the bride La Grange.

They pass the remarks of the day. I turn to my work and press. With goose and gosling I the once beautiful suit of Aloysius La Beouf am nursing back to life, a press here, a stroke there; now some steam forced in from the damp cloth, now dry heat from the gosling bare. Now

with the heel, now with the point. But on the shoulder it is the gosling that most the work must do. Absorbed in my work of art, I make the shoulder of La Beouf's coat again seem square, Mars-like, when I hear low voices, giggles. Behind the partition I peep. There I see La Beouf, seated on the floor, his lap full of patches old. He holds them up, one by each, to the piece of cloth that pretty minx Pauline has, that she may it match. *Tiens!*

"How fortunate," says La Beouf, after that Pauline sweet had gone, "will be the man who obtains that girl. A berry she is. If I were not with the perfectly perfect blue eyes of Hortense impressed, who can tell what might come of this? But as it is—"

He throws up his shoulders, again square under their new-pressed paddings, in a shrug almost of despair. He goes out, wearing a rose.

"Did that chit bring *two* roses and I not regard?" I muse.

It was so. One was in the vase; one La Beouf had worn away.

When again comes La Beouf, again comes Pauline and again she must match patches and Aloysius assist her. Again he gets a rose. Well, so goes life, so goes love. What says the poet? *"Amour fait beaucoup!"* Truly, love is potent.

Yes; for that LaBeouf is winning the blonde Hortense La Grange, he tells us, even if Michael Brannigan, able to wear a new-pressed suit a day, with shoulders square as box top, is his rival. He and La Beouf are of a size.

But comes rain, comes mist, and to preserve the correct elevation of the shoulder of La Beouf's one coat it must be puckered back to shape, twice, even thrice a week. And Pauline meets him that often. The examination is held; the result will be known soon. It is a sharp battle between my irons and the eye of Général Botkine, who has been informed by the blonde Hortense that Aloysius has tried the test to chauffeur him, and so the Général regards La Beouf when Aloysius calls to stroll home with Hortense after work. So seeing La Beouf, that distinguished designer of cannons and balls observes his form so square to see if in his shoulder there are any defects unmilitaire. Finding none, he tells Hortense that La Beouf is a fine figure of a man, fit to father a warrior race. And that makes the heart of La Beouf to sing, Tra, la, la, la.

Brannigan comes once a week for his pressing, but does not wait, having plenty of suits to wear while his others are goosed. So fine his figure, so fine his clothes, that under other conditions it were a pleasure to press him; but alas, Monsieur, conditions alter faces. What is my Hamburg steak, may be your green from Paris. Is it not so?

Comes a day when La Beouf bursts in upon Pauline and me with the big news, astounding: "I am passed by the Bureau Service Civil, heading the list. Next under me is Brannigan, who has gone for the day, he told Hortense. Now it only remains that I present myself this afternoon formally to Général Botkine and pass the examination of his glance and then, *touchez-là,* it is the finish. And I am the chauffeur of Botkine and then—"

"You will wed the divine Hortense and all will be merry as the wedding cake," say that cheerful Pauline.

"Yes, so," La Beouf replies, going behind the partition to disenvelop himself of his so precious, unique suit that I may it goose for the supreme trial of all.

That shy Pauline remain quiet, on the window sill, reading the journal. I press the suit of La Beouf, performing a new miracle of restoration. He in the trousers of *l'ancien régime* sits where Monsieur now is, puffing the seegar, happy, eager.

"Does Mademoiselle require that patches be matched?" asks La Beouf of Pauline.

"No," she replies—it seems with acid on her tongue.

"Ho-hum," says La Beouf.

The trousers I press first, then the vest, then the coat. The trouser I lay at the pressing board's end, near the window, while at the drooping coat collar I labor. Finding the gosling too hot, I lay it at the board's end and take the goose, reckoning to myself that when La Beouf is wed and in his jobs, $15 back pay for pressings will fall to me, when, *sacré bleu* what a stench!

The hot gosling—much too hot—is sizzling into the most important part of the trouser of La Beouf's one and unique suit.

"Chit," I storm at that Pauline, who innocent-like starts her eyes from the journal, "smell you not the burning of the most important part of the one pants of La Beouf and give no warning?"

"Mon Oncle," she demur, "why blame me? I am not the tailor!"

"Not the tailor?" I cry. "What to do with it has that? You are nearest the place of danger. Act, then, act, in the name of blood!"

"Mon Oncle," she purr, "you should not be so careless, placing goslings hot on the pressing board's end—"

"Pouff-paff, for you!" I scream. Yes, scream. I am excité.

But La Beouf! He is crushed, amazed. His only trouser ruined. Within the hour he must appear before the Général Botkine for the test supreme. What to do?

"Quick," he moan, "a patch."

"A patch?" I rejoin, with motions more than usual for a Frenchman of Canada. "A patch as big as the pants? Impossible."

"Then what?" La Beouf demand.

Avise la fin! Yes; consider the end. Another stench!

In my agitation I had picked up the gosling from the pants and laid it down, scorching as it was, on the coat's collar.

"You see," say that heartless Pauline, "how careless you are."

"But what to do?" Aloysius mourns.

"Quick," shout Pauline, "let Aloysius, I mean Monsieur La Beouf, wear that suit of Monsieur Brannigan's. How droll if he with the rival's suit the hand of this so perfectly perfect a blonde La Grange wins!"

Well, what would you, Monsieur? Besides La Beouf to please, there was my $15 he never could pay unless he won joy and job.

Brannigan had with me a well pressed, grey suit, not unlike in pattern that of La Beouf. In a second he has it back of the partition. In a few moments he emerges, again a fine figure of a man.

"Permit me," say Pauline, "to offer you again, for the last time, the rose."

Smiling bewitchingly, she takes the rose from my vase and pins it for his buttonholes bouquet. Out he goes, humming his air, swinging his cane, kissing his finger tips to Pauline. She watches him go, smiling as well as he as she sits there on the broad window sill. And I say to myself:

"Heighho, La Beouf, you pick the flower you wish, but it is not the one—"

A sob I hear. There is that *femme*, bowed in grief, crying.

"For why do you weep, chit?" I thunder, brandishing at her my gosling, now cool.

"Boo hoo," is her only reply.

"First the hole in the pants, then in the collar, then you must cry like the young of the cow, moon-calf that you are, because of what? Because this La Beouf is true to one he loves, that beautiful, perfectly perfect Hortense La Grange."

"I hate that La Grange blue eyed and I hate that La Beouf," she storm, fit to expire, tears spotting her white dress.

"Then why sob?" I insist with cruelness.

"Because I burn my thumb," she sob, holding it for me to see.

Aha, Monsieur, you should have seen! So blistered, swollen! In a flash I pierce it with my needle and let out the water, easing it.

"How burned you your thumb?" I demand.

"Oh, mon Oncle, I could not stand that *he* win that place and that blonde Hortense, so I put the hot gosling on the seat of his one and only trouser," she confess, sob storms again overcoming her.

"And then, content not with that," I storm back, "you help him on to win by thinking of the grey suit of Michael Brannigan that he should wear? Who can understand woman?"

"I ask not to be understood," she sniffle, "but just—to be—loved—"

Open flies the door. In strides La Beouf.

"How now?" I begin. "Back so soon?"

"Yes," he reply. "The office Général Botkine he is closed. He takes a holiday for himself and for his office people he gives one, as well. All is silent there—"

"My suit; who wears my fine grey suit?"

So comes a loud voice, through the open door that that careless La Beouf has not closed in his impetuosity.

It is Brannigan—Michael Brannigan, at his side, *tiens*, a lady. Through change of plans he left not town at all. He is come for his fine grey suit.

With one blow Brannigan fells Aloysius La Beouf. With one hand he reaches down and drags him erect, then out to the sidewalk before we can stay his magnificent arm. La Beouf, like an eel, slips out of the Brannigan coat, leaving it to warlike Michael's firm grasp. Then off square La Beouf for fresh hostilities and actually smites Brannigan once on the cheek, when up rolls an automobile and that lady who came with Brannigan exclaim:

"Gentlemen, moderate your violence; it is Général Botkine."

From the car comes Botkine, so spic, so span, so square of shoulder, all glorious, a perfect man of Mars.

"Pardon me," he says, "I see you by inadvertence, no doubt, in the midst of brawlers. You need an escort. Come, Miss La Grange."

Firmly, with an air, the air militaire, he offers her his arm, hands her, willing, into the car. Then Botkine turns an eye on Brannigan, then one on La Beouf: the one well coated, erect, valorous; the other not coated, defeated by his rival in the fight, and now with cruelly drooping shoulder exposed to the supreme test—to the glance of those eyes like eagles.

"So, this is the candidate to chauffeur me?" he sneer at poor Aloysius. He twists up his little chin beard *gris* with disdain's gesture and uses it to tickle his lips with as he talks so scorchingly, like my gosling sizzling into the most important part of the pants of Aloysius La Beouf. "Then take him away. At this left shoulder gaze! See how is sags. Not such shall chauffeur the renowned Général Botkine, Section d'Ordonnance. I must have about me proper men—men of Mars. Brannigan, you are on the list next to this mannikin. I put my veto on him, on sight. Do you, Michael, take the steering wheel of my car from my chauffeur and run us to Baltimore and return. If I your driving like, the place is yours. As for this La Beouf—pah—never mention him to me again."

"Nor to me, either," sneer the perfectly blonde Hortense.

"Send me those pants to-night, or jail for you," hiss Brannigan to La Beouf, as he pushes the chauffeur of Général Botkine aside on the seat.

A second and that Général Botkine, perfect man of Mars, is in his car and Michael Brannigan, with the perfect shoulders, has the wheel in his crushing grasp and—zum-m-m-m-m-m—off they go, the perfect blonde Hortense bestowing behind not one glance for that poor Aloysius, with fatally drooping shoulder, leaning against the post of my shop door—dazed, bereft of job, bereft of sweetheart, money and credit gone, owing me $15, with a hole burned in the collar of his only coat, one in the important part of his only trousers, with Brannigan's threat staring him in the countenance to jail him unless he gives up the pants he now fills. Ah, Monsieur, wrecks I have seen, but never one so complete, so absolute, so abject, as that.

"Arouse yourself, La Beouf," I cry. "You must do something. There is $15 me to pay and Pauline's thumb was burned putting the gosling on the most important part of your trouser—"

"Mon Oncle," shriek Pauline, fleeing into my shop. "What do you say, to my cheek the blush of shame's misery bringing?"

Aloysius did not arouse, even then. But he pleads with me for a pair of old pants that I keep for customers to wear when being pressed. I yield. What would you? He couldn't roost, crow-like, in my shop.

Inside we find Pauline gone out—by the rear door.

As for La Beouf, soon arrayed in trousers and coat old, he goes out, no more humming, no more the cane swinging. Instead, he goes with the air deject.

Near closing time comes Brannigan, his face dark toward me.

"Why so mad?" I ask, restoring to him his suit, new pressed.

"Cut it. The chow, not my suit," says he. "Savy that?"

I understand not his allusion. He pays, goes out, still mad.

At closing hour a shout at the curb brings me out. There is a coal truck, immense, huge, monstrous. On it, dirty, black, sits its chauffeur, Aloysius La Beouf.

"I have a new job, dirty, but well paid," he says. "Soon you are paid your $15, with interest and I shall have new suits. I must sleep in the garage, especially as my credit at the boarding house is exhausted."

Next morning at breakfast I tell Pauline how it is and with particularity she inquire as to Brannigan's return and also that of La Beouf. She hums an air.

"Strange are women," I think. "First she cries for lost love, then wrecks his life, then cries because he fails and finds out her perfidy and now—now she hums an air."

I return to my shop. No more comes La Beouf. No more comes Brannigan.

One is too poor to need my services—yet; the other too well paid to come to a side street shop, I think. Pauline comes to my shop each day with my lunch and hums as she trips about the place. But no more she brings the dual rose, no more matches colors from the patch box.

"Ah, well," I think, "they are so heartless, these *femmes*."

Her cheeks are pink, her eyes bright, her step springy. So it goes, from grave to gay, eh, so?

Then one day, as she is there, sitting on the window sill, a great, immense coal truck stops in front. Two dirty men are on it. Down from it leaps one ruffian in overalls, who dashes into the shop and without "By your leave, Monsieur," goes to Pauline and kisses her.

"Cease," I shout, "is it proper?"

The man turns and casts before me $16 on the pressing board, saying, "Also $1 interest on the debt of $15." It is La Beouf!

"Well for the $16," I cry out, "but how about kissing my niece before my very face—"

"I did not," he reply, cool, majestic, even in overalls.

"I saw you," waving my shears at him.

"You did not. I kissed her before *my* face," he says. He does it again.

"Cease," I thunder.

"Peace, mon Oncle Paul," say that Pauline, blushing so nice. "What would you have me? An old maid?"

"What now?"

"I have the honor," says La Beouf, with a fine bow, "to ask for the hand of your niece, Pauline, in marriage. We have courted in the park nearby for weeks. I am a man of position now and $25 a week."

Well, what would you, Monsieur? In short, I consent, just as the other man from the truck comes in—Michael Brannigan.

"Our best man," says La Beouf.

"How now?" I demand. "Is this the man who was once so well dress—"

"The same," replies Michael. "I am learning to run the coal truck from Aloysius, earning twice the money I could have earned with Général Botkine."

"I see how it is, friend," I offer, with joy. "You so happy are in married life that you yearn gold to shower on your wife, so you take this coal job, even if so dirty, to bring in the gold to please the so beautiful, the perfect blonde Hortense."

"Cut it," he reply, as I see Aloysius and Pauline kissing, using the broad shoulders of Brannigan as their screen from my eyes, "cut it. Hortense claims the sight of Aloysius and I fighting here turned her against me and him and she listened to Général Botkine all the way to Baltimore and back the day I drove. He made hot love to her and they were married yesterday. Her change of heart reconciled me and Aloysius. As for me, I am going to marry Marie La Beouf, his sister. A double wedding, eh? At your house?"

What would you? I consent.

There, Monsieur's suit is done; he is well pressed, fit to face the world again. Only as he goes about his business, let him at times consider that if the clothes make the man, the tailor makes the clothes and the presser keeps them from going to pieces too soon and the best work of preservation sometimes is done with the gosling, especially when it becomes, as in the case just mentioned, Cupid's Gosling.

But if the gosling becomes involved in the plot and scorches where he should press, what results? In such a case, who can tell where the story shall end?

A DRY FINISH

BY HERBERT WILSON SMITH.

This story has the detail of a blueprint without the blueprint's limited appeal. The finish is not so dry that one cannot squeeze from it a juicy moral such as "Honesty is the best policy," or something like that.

LITTLE automobile wheezed up to the milk platform of the Interurban Station, cramped its fore wheels suddenly and shot out a medium-sized man, followed by a black suitcase. "How much?" the man asked, addressing the driver of the machine.

"Fifty cents, Mr. Meecham," the other answered.

As Meecham pulled out the silver, a ten dollar bill fluttered to the ground, and the driver made a playful grab for it.

"That's all right, Ernie, keep it. There's lots more where that came from."

Ernie gasped at this unheard of generosity and said, with his eyes goggling, "Cert'nly much obliged, Mr. Meecham. G'night." Then the machine rattled away.

It was not later than ten o'clock, but the village streets were already dark, with only the occasional gleam of an oil lamp as some tardy householder went about latching up for the night. The Interurban Station was closed and dark.

Meecham paced the platform until he heard the distant whistle of the coming car. As it ground to a stop he picked up his black suitcase and got aboard. He paid the conductor with a friendly nod, and tucked his suitcase back of his legs, then settled low in his seat, tilted his derby hat over his eyes, and apparently slept the hour's run into Detroit.

After leaving the car, he walked up a side street and turned a few corners with the sureness of long habit. He went up the steps of a well-kept old granite house, and asked the negro maid, who immediately answered the bell, for Vera. She grinned as she let him in, sliding the chain in the door after him, and went up-stairs.

Meecham set his suitcase down, took off his derby and wiped his forehead, for he was, as always, ill at ease before this red-plush splendor. Sounds of subdued laughter, distant music, and discreet gaiety were all about.

A large woman in a too-elaborate evening gown came down the stairs. She was handsome in a heavy way, dark, highly colored, with the shadow of hair on her lip. Meecham rose and swallowed nervously, about to speak, but she forestalled him.

"Did yuh get it?"

"Yes."

"Well, what now?"

"I'm goin' to New York to-night on the Wolverine, get it safely planted, and send for you in about a week. Here's a hundred dollars to square up with the missus and to buy your ticket when you come."

He handed her five bills, which she counted and stuffed down the front of her dress.

She kissed him.

"Well, I gotta be going." He put on his hat and picked up the suitcase. Vera unlatched the door and kissed him again.

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye,—next week." And he hurried away.

When he reached Woodward Avenue he looked at his watch. It was now 11:30, so he got on a Michigan Avenue car which took him to the M. C. station. Here he bought a ticket and a berth to Cincinnati. From the ticket window he went to the telegraph desk and addressed a night letter to Stephen A. Giles, American House, Tucson, Arizona. He considered a moment over the text, and finally wrote: "Have

entered order as by your wire to sell your General Motors at 15 points gain over to-day's market. What about Overland? B."

The train announcer called "P. M., C. H. and D. South, 11:55," and Meecham went through the gate, gave both his transportation and Pullman tickets to the porter, and, asking to be awakened at Middletown, went directly to his berth.

He unlaced his black shoes and packed them in his suitcase, from which he took a pair of tan low-cuts. This pair of tans he put on the floor under his berth, and then undressed and went to sleep.

When he awakened at Middletown the next morning, he dressed partially, gathered up his shoes, suitcase and the rest of his clothes, and hastened to the men's end of the car. No one else had invaded the wash room so early. First he took out a suit of fine shepherd plaid, excellent in material and cut. He quickly changed trousers, folded his worn blue serge and put it in the case. Next, with his knife, he slit the black oilcloth that was but a temporary cover for the tan suitcase of good leather. Then he took out his toilet roll and with a pair of manicure scissors cut the oilcloth cover in half.

From the suitcase he lifted a pile of currency in flat green bundles, each banded with a yellow strip stamped in bold letters, $500. He counted the bundles. There were sixteen.

From one bundle, from which some bills had already been taken, he counted off ten twenty-dollar bills, which he folded and put in his trousers pocket.

Dividing the package into two piles of eight each he wrapped each stack carefully in the half of the oilcloth cover and snapped a rubber band around them.

With his scissors he clipped short his dark mustache, laying the hair carefully in a piece of tissue paper. This he twisted into a spiral and putting a cigarette in his mouth struck a match, lighting first the cigarette and then the spiral of twisted paper, which he watched burn clear to his fingers. Still smoking he shaved carefully and finished dressing.

He ripped the sweat band and label from his derby hat and stuffed them into his pocket. He smashed the crown in with his fist, opened the window and tossed out the broken hat, and as he watched it roll and bump along the tracks, he took a folded, homespun cap from his pocket, and pulled it on. Several half-dressed men tumbled into the wash room, snorting and rubbing their eyes. Meecham looked out of the window. They were just going through Ivorydale and would be in Cincinnati soon.

He snapped his suitcase shut, tucked his two oilcloth wrapped bundles carelessly under his arm and gave the suitcase to the porter as he stepped to the vestibule of the car.

He looked the part of a young salesman, with his grey suit and cap well set off by the soft tie and collar. He had shaved ten years from his face, now boyishly smooth; and the oilcloth bundles looked like packages of samples.

From the station he got an Eighth Street car and soon landed downtown. He got off at Fountain Square and stepped into the Mecca.

"Gimme' a shot," he said to the lone bartender as he set down his case. While he poured a small drink he asked, "Say, I want to send these samples back to the house, will you wrap 'em up for me?" and he dropped the two bundles on the bar.

"Sure," the bartender answered, "will these do?" and shoved each bundle into a square corrugated pasteboard carton intended for a quart whiskey bottle. These he wrapped and tied with twine, making two substantial packages.

"Thanks," said Meecham, and he crossed the square to the post office where he addressed each package to Stephen A. Giles, Tucson, Arizona, from Gottlieb Untermeyer, No. 4875 Warsaw Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio. Then he pushed the package through the registry window.

"What's it contain?" the clerk queried.

"Merchandise," Meecham answered.

"Fifty-two cents postage and twenty cents registry, seventy-two cents. Return receipts?"

"Nope," replied Meecham, picking up the two slips the clerk tore off the register. He crossed the square again, entered a restaurant and ate a hearty breakfast.

As he came out he looked at his watch. It was now 8:30. So he lit a cigarette and swung down the street to the Louisville and Cincinnati Packet Line dock, and got aboard the day boat, loaded with special excursionists.

He went directly to his stateroom and there unpacked his suitcase, took out the blue serge suit and even the shirt, collar, tie and shoes he had worn the day before. From the suit he cut off all the buttons and did the same with the shirt and underwear, and made a bundle of them all, putting in the sweat band and label torn from his hat. He stuffed this bundle under his arm and went down the narrow companion way to the lower deck.

They were leaving Cincinnati; the boat churned along well to the middle of the stream, passing empty coal barges.

Meecham stood at the stern, watching the slow moving panorama, and idly tossed the buttons one at the time into the yellow stream. He wandered about the boat until he ran across the captain, with whom he struck up an acquaintance, telling him about a fishing trip from which he was just returning.

"I've got some old fishing clothes here that I hate to take home, they stink so damn bad; and besides,"—Meecham laughed,—"we spilled a lot of whiskey on them at that last party I was telling you about. The wife wouldn't like it."

"Take 'em down to the engine room and throw 'em in the fire," the captain suggested.

"Guess I'll do that," Meecham agreed, and walked to the engine room with the captain.

"Open the door, Pete," the captain said, and Meecham threw his bundle into the yellow heat where it flared up for a minute and was gone.

"What the wife don't know, won't hurt her, eh boy?" And the captain slapped Meecham on the shoulder.

"G'bye captain," said Meecham, in parting at Louisville. "Your next evening off look me up—Powelson, J. H. Powelson on Breckenridge Street; anybody out there can tell you where Jack Powelson lives." And he ran up the wharf.

Meecham walked a few blocks until he reached a pawnshop.

"Want a second-hand bag," he demanded of the sad-eyed young Hebrew in charge. He finally chose a well-travelled bag of tan cowhide, deep and roomy, into which he transferred his belongings from the suitcase, and took a car out Broadway to the L. and N. Station. Here he bought a ticket and berth over the L. and N. and Southern Pacific to Los Angeles, via New Orleans; checked the empty suitcase at the station parcel desk; and then addressed and mailed a letter to Stephen A. Giles, American House, Tucson, Arizona. After a leisurely supper at the station he boarded the train for New Orleans. He stood in the vestibule as the train left Louisville and, as it roared over a bridge, he sprung open the trap-floor and threw the claim check far out. He saw it flash in the water below.

He went to bed with a snug feeling of security, for not a thing remained of Will Meecham. From the skin out he was another man.

He changed trains at New Orleans and the day following gave himself to pleasant reflection over the completeness of his accomplishment. As the train raced across the Texas plains he sat in the smoking compartment and reviewed each step that he had taken. The suitcase checked in the Louisville station was the last possible trace of Will Meecham. It was new and unmarked, and in a month it would be sold for charges.

If the train were wrecked he would simply be an obscure traveller with a modest amount of money upon his person. The rest of the money was safe in the mail. Good thing he sent it by mail instead of express, for money sometimes gets lost in express offices. He smiled pleasantly to himself at this thought.

It was a good thing that he had told the clerk he didn't want a return receipt; and the receipts for the two packages, those two thin paper slips, he had rolled up in a ball and tossed into the spittoon in the Post Office. No, he didn't do that either, he put them in his pocket. He went through his pockets methodically; except for small sil-

ver they were empty. Oh well, it was a small thing anyway; but he drummed his fingers on his chin, ruminating.

A man sat opposite him. "This is the time of year to travel," the stranger said; "train ain't so crowded, and then there's less dust in riding in the rainy season."

"Yeh," Meecham answered absently.

"On business, or just traveling?"

"Just traveling." Damn those slips, they were spoiling his day.

"What business y'in?" the stranger persisted.

Meecham plunged into conversation with what was more of an effort than usual for him, and answered.

"Oh, not any business particularly, just dabble around. Sometimes a little motor stock, sometimes a little real estate."

"Where's your home?"

"Detroit, when I'm home at all. I go to Mackinaw or Goderich in the summer and East quite often in the winter, but Detroit's what I call home."

"So? I live in Detroit myself," the stranger answered, "way out Grand Boulevard. Where'd you live there?"

This was not at all disconcerting, as Meecham had mentally provided for such a coincidence.

"Lately I've been living at the Tuller when I'm in town. Used to live at the Library Park Hotel, but I had a lot of vacant property out at Grosse Point I sold." And he smiled knowingly.

"I see, going up." And the stranger grinned too.

The rest of the day Meecham was kept busy dodging the possibility of mutual acquaintance and admitting a vague knowledge of people about whom he discovered his new found townsman also hazy. The Detroit man left the train at El Paso, and the next day Meecham could again reflect.

By now Letty would be the center of the village sympathy.

Letty was his wife, and Meecham thought the risk he was running was worth while, if only to get this far away from her.

Her folks were taking care of her, of course, as they were amply able to do, and she was getting a lot of the sympathetic notoriety she liked. No, everything was all right if he could find those two slips. He went through his bag, unfolding and shaking out each garment; went through the pockets of the waistcoat he had not even worn. Well, it was too late to worry about a little thing like that now.

It wasn't Letty's fault that he had taken up with this Vera in Detroit. He didn't blame her for that any more than he blamed Vera for putting him up to the robbery. Meecham had met the woman on one of his little sprees, and she had fancied him.

He had been flattered, and telling her of his importance in the world, had explained in detail the large shipment of currency which came to the village bank, by express, twice a month to meet the pay roll for the Consolidated Manufacturing Company. It varied between seven and nine thousand dollars, the cashier had told him.

Meecham was proud to be so identified with the town's one industry. To Vera this spelled opportunity with a big O, and she had told Meecham how easy it would be for him to take this money when it came in on that last train at night, drive over to Whiteford where he could get the interurban, and be on his way before the bank opened in the morning.

She had told him so often that he had begun to think, himself, it would be easy. He had come to regard it as a goal, as a man does any ambition.

Finally they had decided upon a time and had planned accurately for it, and Meecham had followed this mutual plan to the letter until he left Detroit. From then on he had plans of his own.

Yes, the plans had been good, better than he had hoped. He had had the clothes made for him by a Detroit tailor, who did not know him, so the new name Meecham gave was as good as any. He had carried these new clothes to the village inconspicuously, a garment at a time, also the shirts, collars and underwear, and had hidden them in the suitcase at the station office far back under the desk. This suitcase he had ordered sent by express from a mail order house to A. H. Henry, and had receipted for it himself.

A fortunate excursion made the day trip on the river possible and the friendliness of

the old captain on the river boat had been a help. Meecham jumped. "That's where I left them." The registry receipts were in his stateroom on that boat. On the bed. No, on the washstand. He could see them clearly.

That good-hearted old captain would save them for him, maybe try to find him on Breckenridge Street to give them to him. That might be bad. Oh, well, maybe he had burned them with his clothes in the boiler room. But he was still drumming his chin with his fingers, wondering, when the train pulled into Tucson late that night. Here Meecham left the train.

At the American House he registered in a clear hand, Stephen A. Giles, Detroit Michigan.

"Oh yes, been a telegram here for you since Tuesday, Mr. Giles," and the clerk gave him the message he had sent from Detroit.

Meecham thanked him, opened and read it, then asked, "Too late to get a drink before I go to bed?"

"About six months too late," was the answer. "Arizona went dry last election."

So Meecham climbed the stairs to his room. Before going to sleep he searched microscopically through all his clothes and belongings for the registry slips. He did not find them. The next morning in his box he found the letter he had mailed in Louisville, and two notifications of registered packages for Stephen A. Giles at the Post Office. He strolled over and presented the cards.

"Any identification?" Meecham smiled, pulled out of his pocket the telegram, the letter, some personal cards printed Stephen A Giles, a receipted tailor's bill, and turned back the pocket and showed the clerk the label in his coat.

"Guess that's enough," the clerk grinned, and handed him two packages.

"Sign here."

Meecham picked up the packages with a sigh of relief, for he was almost done.

As he glanced about he saw a man in a slouch hat loafing near the door. Meecham started as the thought of the lost slips flashed through his mind. He shifted his packages under his other arm and, as he did, the stranger looked at him with sudden interest. Meecham passed him nervously and walked to the outskirts of the town. He looked back. The man in the slouch hat had followed. Meecham walked on up a hill and soon came upon a number of little white cottages grouped about a large building. Over the gate was the name, "Mountainside Sanatorium."

"Is the doctor here?" he asked a man on the grounds.

"In the office."

As Meecham turned to go in he looked back. The man in the slouch hat stood at the gate looking across the valley.

Hardly time to have got action if they had found those registry slips, he reflected. In the office he asked the nurse in charge for the doctor. She went into the doctor's office. While she was gone he went through his pockets absently, thinking of the man standing by the gate. From the little match pocket inside the front of his coat he pulled the two registry slips. With a sigh of deep relief he tossed them into the grate where a small fire smouldered, just as the nurse came back.

"The doctor isn't in. He is at his downtown office. You can see him there," she informed him.

"What a peaceful world after all, now that the slips are disposed of," reflected Meecham as he went out and looked about. "This would be a good place to lie low for a couple of months." The man still stood across the road from the gate.

Meecham smiled confidently and started back the way he had come.

"Going downtown? I'll walk back with you," the stranger suggested, and fell into step with him, glancing curiously now and then at Meecham's bundles.

Now that the danger was over Meecham found his new friend very affable. Passing a building downtown, the stranger suddenly took Meecham's arm and guided him firmly through the doorway.

"Here is another of them young fellows," he said to the man who sat inside, "trying to smuggle hop or whiskey in to Bill Neville's boy up at the Sanatorium. Should think it was enough for the poor kid to be a lunger without having these hop heads

layin' for him all the time. The old man is almost off his nut worrying about that kid."

"But there's no whiskey in those boxes nor drugs either," Meecham yelled, suddenly illumined.

"Easy, son, easy, lying won't help you none. We'll have to confiscate 'em for evidence. Look at 'em." And through the wrapping paper could dimly be seen the letters "—ed River Whiskey" printed on the cartons which the bartender had used.

"But it isn't whiskey, I tell you. Just some private papers of my own. You can open it and see, er—no, that is, you don't need to open 'em. I'll swear it isn't whiskey."

"If you're right, I'll let you go, of course, boy, but I'll have to open 'em to know," and the judge looked down kindly.

"But they're just some private papers, I tell you; don't open 'em."

"If they're letters from your girl, I won't read 'em, sonny," said the judge and he slit the wrappers around the cartons and pulled from them the black oilcloth bundles.

"See, it isn't whiskey."

"Maybe it's dope," answered the judge and snapped off the rubber bands and unrolled the oilcloth.

When the currency tumbled out, making a heap on the judge's desk, his eyes popped out. "What's this, young fellow?" he shouted.

At Meecham's stammered, red-faced explanations, the judge answered, "Well, we'll just take care of you and your money until you can remember where you got it."

"Jimmy," to the deputy, "you'd better run around to the Post Office and the bank and the express office and see if there is any notice of anybody missing with a lot of money." He counted the piles. "About eight thousand dollars."

NEXT month: A NIGHT IN PARIS, MASS. *by Gorton Veeder Carruth,* in which a jaded city editor acknowledges to himself that "journalism is nothing more than newspaper work." Whatever it may be in Paris, France, in Paris, Massachusetts it is nothing but one monotonous round of "Ladies' Aid meetings, cheap politics, trolleys off the track, W. C. T. U. conventions, seventeen drunks arrested yesterday, a fine window display by our leading merchant—and advertiser," etc. In this frame of mind, he goes out on Main street, which should have been named "Commonplace Avenue," and drops plumb into the adventure of the *thousand and second night.*

NICHOLAS DRAKOS GOES HOME

BY JAMES HENRY THOMPSON

Finding that the American melting pot has been cruelly thorough in his case, Nicholas Drakos plans to play the stranger in his father's house for one night, hoping thereby to heighten tha dramatic effect when he reveals his identity.

ITH palm-shaded eyes rode Nicholas Drakos on the unscrubbed deck of the dirty steamer as it plowed its early morning way from the blue Mediterranean into the earth-stained waters that hold the Ionian isles. Hard-strained was his vision to keep pace with clairvoyant memory that went leaping with eager swiftness, far, far ahead in the direction of his gaze. The hazy shores of Greece, serrated where rose storied mountains to an unreal purple sky, stretching to zenith in early morning lassitude, calm with the serenity of ages, halted his vision.

Ten years before, Nicholas Drakos had sailed around the jagged foot of the Peloponesus, and in the evening light had said reluctant farewell to scenes he now made effort to recall. Over that decade past his memory went flashing, over leagues of gray-green sea to another serrated skyline whose mountains were built of man and not of gods. Nothing was in those void ten years to hold affection, and away through the purple mist to the future went Nicholas Drakos' restless thoughts in search of a sedative.

The past of Nicholas Drakos was but an incident. Life lay all ahead. He was going home.

Memory set its sketching block in a gray, rock-bound hamlet in Arcadian hills. There it drew a drabbled hut, mean as the raw life it held. Memory peopled the crude shelter with two old folk, wrinkled and ugly and dirty; but Affection, with soft, pink-dipped brush, came and tinted the likeness sweet and kind and clean.

Memory's pencil flew faster and more eager as, in soft curves, it sketched a straight-limbed, oval-faced girl, utterly lovely and of the grace of Diana and Psyche.

Nicholas Drakos sighed, and the sigh was the sigh of men of all time who have been drawn across the ways of the earth by the lodestone of a woman's grace.

For a moment Memory was left to sketch another picture of a bustling American city where gods are forgot and hot paves leave no room for asphodel bloom. It drew a cramped fruit stand, and in the man who dealt out wealth of sun-kissed apples and sugared grapes there was a likeness of Nicholas.

The portrait's original smiled at the caricature and felt with protecting fingers the soft-hard feel of a cylinder that lay in a tight-buttoned pocket. For a moment that touch brought recollection of unrestful nights on a hard cot in the rear of the little shop and unnourishing meals of unsalable fruit whose summation was in the cylinder.

To Nicholas Drakos, the soft-hard cylinder was the magic wand that would make all dreams come true.

Two sunrises later and Nicholas was toiling over hard Arcadian roads. His tight-pinched patent leather shoes irked feet that ached for peasant sheepskin; his body sweated 'neath smart American serge; the linen collar wilted about his clean-shaven neck; the glue-stiffened derby hat was a pot of heat on his curly head. The shiny yellow suitcase that he carried was rested often.

Nicholas sang as he marched over the boulder-strewn path. One hand never relinquished assuring grasp on a roll of money, the bills, some dirty, some clean, made soggy by moisture from nervously

perspiring palm; the other hand carried the suitcase that held of the wonders and riches of the world. All that remained of a discarded past and the key to a keenly-awaited future were in Nicholas' grasp.

Back there in the noisy Yankee city he had been ignored. Had any known of his little hoard, it, too, would have been despised,—a picayunish sum in that land where riches are counted only in five figures. But here, amid the arid rocks and gale-thwarted trees, where money is curio and life hangs on tenuous thread, Nicholas was a wealthy man. The money would become a fortune when transmuted in the alchemy of a Megalopolis bank to multiple Grecian francs. Overnight he would be touched and changed from an unnoticed fruit vendor to a great man,—a head man perhaps.

Riches other than money carried Nicholas: dreams of peace and comfortable security for an old pair, dreams of beauty and softness for a slim-limbed girl. For a fustanella-clad old shepherd whose hoary, silky beard swept his thin waist, and for a bent old dame, weaving always at her outdoor loom, he was carrying riches of surcease of labor; for the goddess turned girl, he was carrying wealth and fulfillment of promise.

'Neath a broad-spreading plane tree that held precarious footing along the rocky path, Nicholas stopped. In a bed of fragrant arbutus hedged about by rhododendrons dainty pink he flung himself. T'wixt his widespread legs he drew the shiny yellow suitcase. He threw open the lid, and from the case's tight-packed contents drew forth package after package.

On the bosky floor of the plane's broad tent he spread his treasures. A soft woolen jacket that might ward from old bones the chill rigor of Arcadian mists, an amber-bitted pipe and a well-filled tobacco pouch, a coat of warm stuff, a cap, a silver-mounted comb, just right for a silky beard, all such an array of gifts that a thoughtful-minded son might bring,—were in Nicholas' pack.

From a deeper hidden part of the case Nicholas drew a smaller packet. With infinite care that no crease should mar the ribbon that bound it, and with infinite brightness in his eyes, he undid the fastenings. From beds of tissue paper wadding he brought forth trinkets that sent reflections of the sun flashing through the shady glade. There were things a man buys but once and for but one: a necklace whose slender golden chain held a pendant set with lapis and diamond, a wondrous ring whose chased green gold held a ruby, a brooch craftily enameled in imitation of Botticelli's elfin picture of Aphrodite rising from sea foam bed. There were laces and silks and fanciful things of no earthly use except to adorn beauty that little needed such adornment.

After a moment's rest Nicholas repacked the shiny yellow suitcase, munched some black bread and blacker olives; arose, stretched his legs, winced at the pinch of his tight shoes, grasped again the cylinder of bills, and resumed his way along the uncertain path. The gay little song was repeated. It held something of heartache and wistfulness, something of joy and promise, and had been an American cabaret favorite when Nicholas sailed away. In a throaty voice the traveler repeated its oft-recurring phrase, the only words he knew of the foolish little song, "for me and my gal."

Returning sights refreshed memory. Each new vista was assurance that the journey's end was near. Reality crowded from out Nicholas' mind the half doubt that tortured it. Another turn of the road and he would be in sight of home.

Nicholas hesitated a moment before he dared round the jutting rock that stood sentinel in the path. Then he plunged as a swimmer braves the first shock of chill water.

A cluster of huts nestled 'neath a sharp-rising cliff. The mean structures of gray stone and faded brown thatch were scarce distinguishable from the dun landscape. Here and there were cone-shaped hives where bees at work sung the droning monotone that gave musical motif to the scene. Goats wandered at will through straggled byres, and from a score of outdoor fireplaces rose wisps of smoke. Fig and olive trees grew as untrained as the careless hamlet. One building alone in

the collection had semblance of personality. That gained dignity from an added story that reared it above the flat structures about it, and because a scarlet flowering vine was trained over its portal.

Straight to the house of the red flower marched Nicholas. His heart palpitated and his knees were uncertain as those of a man who fears for what he shall find. Straight to the portal 'neath the crimson bloom he went, as one who knows well his way. He knocked with knuckles on jamb in good American fashion. Then, his summons unanswered, he called:

"Aphrodite!" and added in the Greek of his fathers the quaint greeting known of years, "*Kyrie eleison!* It is I, Nickaus!"

A stir within the house, and a girl, matching in glowing color the flower above her head, came rushing, all the long-pent waiting of years in her eyes, all the breathless surprise of great joy in the greeting that started from her lips:

"*Kyrie*—"

The salutation ended, half finished; and whelming surprise was quick followed by shuddering disappointment. Resentment at cruel delusion chased the glad smile from hurt eyes. Hands that had started the sign of the Cross dropped limp. Then in dull, level tones spoke the girl, as one speaks whose comprehension is numbed by sudden fact:

"Why did you trick me? What news do you bring? How came you, stranger, to know my name and that of Nickaus? Who sent you here and what message do you carry or what do you seek? Tell, me, what of him; what of Nicholas Drakos; for surely he must have sent you here?"

Nicholas reached to take the girl, but she evaded, and he answered:

"But, little Aphrodite, dost not know me then? Have I so changed or hast thou forgotten? It is I, truly, thy Nickaus, come back after a ten of years, come back for thee, my Aphrodite. Dost not know?"

Doubt and a wish to believe struggled in the girl's blue eyes. The man saw; and, with a quick motion, too eager for its purpose, he snapped loose from beneath his shirt a thin silver chain from which hung suspended half of an old Greek coin stamped in tribute to the goddess of love with her symbol, a tortoise.

"Match it!" he cried.

And the girl, doubt dispelled, from 'round her smooth neck snatched from a ribbon the other half of the coin; and the pledge, common to all lands and peoples where lovers have lived, was reunited.

As the halves of the Aphrodite-coin fitted together, so did Nicholas Drakos and the girl rush to embrace.

Breath restored, Aphrodite stood away and searched the figure and face of Nicholas for some feature such as she had stored in memory for a decade.

"My Nickaus back to me!" she breathed in astonishment. "But how changed! Surely this America doth work wonders that it hath thee so altered. Why didst not send me word of thy coming? Ah, Nickaus, a pretty patter thou hast set for my heart."

"No courier could come so fast as I; when eagerness urges, feet speed fast," answered Nicholas.

"And hath America changed thee otherwise than in looks, my Nickaus?" asked the girl with the coquetry her goddess namesake bequeathed to all women.

"Nay, Little One, but in this: It hath taught me to love thee better. Not as the Greek shall I love thee now, ashamedly and as chattel; but as Americans love, warmly and with my life that I give thee. Ah, my Rose Flower, even so great a change as when thou left *shalvas* for thy pretty dress hath made thee to me a thing to be adored. See. I shall begin to teach thee American love!"

From his shiny yellow suitcase Nicholas drew the ribbon-bound package, and into Aphrodite's lap threw gift after gift,—the things a man buys but once and for but one.

"And this, my Aphrodite," said Nicholas, as he displayed the green gold ring with its blood ruby, "shall wait until the day of thy crowning. When the *koumbaros* holds the orange wreath above thy head, then shalt thou wear it. See, its ruby is the color of Aphrodite's flower there on the vine we planted so long ago, and whose flower glows red and fresh as the love I pledged thee then. It is the pledge we

give in America that love shall be as endless as its ring."

So they talked for an hour, with love banterings, before Nicholas started guiltily and reached for pack and hat.

"Aha, Little Circe, thou hast cast spell over me! Almost thou hadst made me forget the old ones. Go I must now to them who have waited as long as thou. They, too, must have surprise and gifts. *Khairete!*"

"Aye, Nickaus, go to the old ones. They may claim thee for a while before thou shalt be all mine. They, too, will be, oh, so glad! But Nickaus,"—and a merry laugh broke Aphrodite's sentence, — "suppose they, too, are fooled? Think you they will know their own son?"

"Aha, a joke, a joke!" shouted Nicholas with a Greek's ready impulse to make a trick. "Here's how I shall play it on the old white-beard and the wrinkled mother. If they know me not when I shall ask for bed to-night, then I shall punish them for their lack. I shall wait until morn before I tell them who I am."

"A capital plot!" cried Aphrodite. "But let me share. Let me come with the sunrise to-morrow and ask for thee. Then shall we tell of the trick. The joy will be greater if we all share it."

"Thus shall it be done," assented Nicholas. Then, with another embrace and a parting *"khairete,"* he swung off along an upland path.

A mile from the huddled huts of the hamlet stood a lonely shelter, the home that Nicholas Drakos had come far to seek. Its low walls were lichened, its maize thatch mouldy with damp. At its door stood a cumbrous loom and by its side the smoke-blackened kitchen. Twilight softened its rudeness.

A halloo from Nicholas summoned to the door a patriarchal figure of a man, straight as a reed, with snow white beard that swept his waist and gleaming silver hair that framed his brown, wind-tanned face. The skirts and leggins of peasant fustanella, the flat, round cap and loose-sleeved coat were in strange distinction to the modern dress of the traveler.

"Kyrie eleison!" greeted the old man, no sign of recognition in voice or face.

"Kyrie eleison!" answered Nicholas, and continued, "Sire, I have traveled far and have yet far to go, and, indeed, your Arcadian paths are not easy to feet unused to their roughness. Can you give me hospice for the night and a bit whereon to sup?"

"Aye, that we can, stranger," answered the shepherd, with the quick hospitality of the Greek hills. "There's none but my dame and me here, and a visitor will be welcome to share our rude fare."

"Thy fare shall be my fare for the night," said Nicholas, "hence I shall have no complaint. He is a poor man who finds fault with things of his own choosing."

"Enter!" was the simple invitation of the old man as he stepped aside to clear the doorway.

Nicholas Drakos needed all his powers of restraint as he stepped within the shabby room; for there in a corner, huddled over a bleating kid, was the woman he had come thousands of miles to clasp in his arms. He checked the first step of an impulsive rush, and from force of long habit removed the hat from his head.

The old man noted the unwonted courtesy and said, "You speak like a Greek, but your dress and manners are of another land. Whence came you?"

"From Athens, father," responded Nicholas. "From Athens on a journey into these shepherd lands to buy from such as you kids and goats to supply our markets."

"Again welcome then," spoke the patriarch, "for you may bring to us some francs we direly need. Our food has been without salt and our coffee without sweetness these many days. No *tambaki* has been in my pipe for long."

The old woman had dragged forward a goathide-covered bench and invited Nicholas to accept the seat. She bustled from the room and started fire in the outdoor stove. Soon she returned with the huge common dish of the household filled with a fragrant peasant meal of curds, black bread, black olives and a broth of wild herbs. This she set before Nicholas with a single word, "Eat!"

While the guest was at his meal the dame peered curiously from her task of nursing the sick kid. Her scrutiny was intense, but never gave hint that it was other than curiosity in a stranger. The lack of recognition stiffened Nicholas' determination to play out his joke, and a poorly suppressed chuckle was hidden under a very real choking over the unfamiliar and highly-seasoned food.

The wrinkled woman had spoken no word except the single monosyllabic invitation to food until the platter was well cleared and taken away. Then, after Nicholas had filled a pipe and given tobacco to his host, who drew in avid mouthfuls of smoke, she ventured a timid query:

"Hath ever been to America?"

"That I have, good mother; and a great land it is."

A new interest illumined the wrinkled face. The old man leaned nearer to his guest and joined in the interrogation.

"Mayhap you knew our son in that land; he is called Nicholas Drakos?" quavered the eager old voices, but continued, in expectation of disappointment, "but that would be too great a miracle in that so great country."

"No, I knew not such a man there," prevaricated the trickster. "There are so many Greeks there and scattered far over many leagues. Tell me of this son."

With the eagerness of maternity and a great enthusiasm, the woman took up the recital.

"Ten long years have gone since he went away with the promise that when his fortune was made he would return to give us ease from our hard life. Ten years are long years for old ones such as we. I begin to fear that Nickaus must hurry else we shall not be here to greet him. Times I think that never again shall I see the little Nickaus I washed in wine and wyrtle so long ago. But he always was a dutiful son, and I know that so soon as his fortune is gathered he will keep his promise. But oft I think that my Nickaus must be in hardship that not ere this has he come. 'Tis a thing none else can know,—how a mother yearns for her only son."

The recital dragged on to wearisome length, a long recitation of virtues of the absent one, with never a hint of complaint, and always with full confidence that some day the child would come back to fulfill the promise made. The old man nodded over the oft-told tale, while Nicholas interjected sympathetic questionings that urged forward the narrative that needed so little urging.

With nervous eloquence and a sublimity of faithful resignation, the old mother reached the climax of her story. She had assumed individual ownership of longing for her boy and ignored any paternal interest in her pain. "Great God is good, and my Nickaus must come again. I must not grow weary of waiting and I must not doubt. But I tire you with this of one you never saw, and weary limbs need rest. Come, good man, prepare the pallet for our guest. He shall sleep this night where Nickaus should, and sweet be his dreams."

In one end of the common room of the hut, farthest away from the huddled eaning ewes and day-old kids, the whitebeard laid an odorous bed of goatskins and homespun stuffs. To this Nicholas was pointed, while the host arranged another and similar pallet in a far corner for himself and wife.

The shepherd poured a strong-smelling flagon of resinated wine, cut a crust of black bread, and offered this refreshment before Nicholas was to seek what rest could be found in the ill-smelling room with its restless occupants. Then, with wishes for untroubled sleep, the traveler and his hosts retired, the process being no more complicated than to lie on the pallets without removing any part of the clothing. Nicholas, however, slipped off the pinching shoes, laid his coat on an outjutting stone of the wall and undid his linen collar. His long walk of the day and the restrained stress of homecoming were excellent sleep producers. As he slumbered, a smile lay on his face and dreams of the morning refreshed his weary brain.

In the far corner stretched side by side the old ones. Sound but noisy sleep soon found the shepherd, but restless was the mother. Tossing and shifting on her hard bed until the middle watches of the night,

her worn old nerves harassed by the freshly recounted longing for the far-strayed son and her great passion for him, sleep was not for her. Over and over again she mumbled to herself, "Ah, if he who now sleeps in my Nickaus's bed were but Nickaus, how happy would be my sleep! Why could it not be so?"

Far into the night she repeated the question. Continued brooding over the boy who had gone to seek a fortune, but who had not returned to redeem his unselfish promise, magnified the presence of a stranger in the place of her son to an affront. The affront grew to an outrage.

From the couch where Nicholas lay came sounds of even, strong breathing. The old woman arose and crept stealthily to the pallet and looked upon the unconscious, smiling face.

"Why, oh why, could it not be he?" she whispered, but with no glint of recognition in the watery old eyes.

Back to her bed, she resumed the querulous mouthings, the burden of which was a plaint that a stranger occupied the place she firmly believed should have been taken that night by her son. The outrage grew more unjust, and in her disordered brain the stranger became an intruder.

Strangely confused reasonings obsessed the old mind; moral forces and a great, overwhelming love of offspring did debate. Instincts sprung from blood that made Spartan motherhood a world symbol, love that passeth understanding, were mingled in the processes that seethed in the doting, age-weakened intelligence. In the end came a peace in place of the brooding tumult,—a peace born of resolve. Mother love triumphed. The passion that sent yearning pains through the hungry, withered breast put at naught all other impulses, all traditions of right and wrong. It overwhelmed conscience and challenged commandments. "Thou shalt not" was a futile phrase before it. "I want my son," became summation of all purposes, all desires.

In times like this, when human souls go amuck with burden of desire, are visions seen and great crimes given sanction.

Again the tired, shuddering form, racked by its hysteric agony, made its way to the sleeping Nicholas. Again the straining, myopic eyes peered into the smiling face. Gnarled knuckles wiped desperately to clear dimmed sight; hurriedly one siccated hand involuntarily made the sign of the Cross on sunken breast.

The vision had arrived.

The woman staggered back to the bed where lay the white-beard. She shook and woke him and motioned him to follow her without the hut and to a stone seat underneath the twisted olive tree. The dim light on the wisps of straggled, dank hair about her head, the eyes, bright with excitement and sunk deep from loss of sleep, the intense pose of the frail, nerve-tautened body, stole away the mother beauty that had shone while she told of her lost son. A vulpine craftiness was in its stead.

In a voice tense with strain, while bony fingers gripped tight the arm of the old man, she whispered:

"Listen, father, this must be done! None shall know,—how can any know? This stranger, this sheep buyer, who has come to our far hills, hath been sent of God! I have dreamed a vision and this I have seen! He hath come, a messenger, to bring to us the blessings that our age deserves! He hath come to fulfill Nickaus' promise! I have seen a sign and this I know to be true! To-night as he lay sleeping I stooped to peer at his face! It was the face of my son! Of my Nickaus! It was a sign! He hath come that we may have Nickaus home again! I have seen it! God hath spoken! I felt in the pockets of the coat he left hanging, as the vision directed me, and therein is riches,—great riches, old man! Strange money, too, is that he brings, money brought from afar! He hath come as God's messenger to bring it to us! My vision hath told me so!"

Stiffened muscles and a gleam of cupidity in the eyes of the shepherd were her only answer, and she continued in quick, gasping phrases:

"This is the chance Great God hath put in our way! But we must do our part! The vision hath told me how! While the stranger sleeps you shall touch him! Just once and strongly so that he may feel no

hurt nor make outcry! Then shall he be replaced by our son! By my Nickaus! The money that he hath brought shall then be sent to the far land where Nickaus waits that he may come home! To-morrow the priest shall write! Dost thou not see, old man? 'Tis so easily done! None shall know, for none knows that the stranger sleeps here! It is the will of God! Come now but once while I show you the vision! You shall see how much like my Nickaus he looks as he sleeps there!"

The dry old voice had risen to shrill importunity and the sharp old fingers clawed deep into the flesh of the patriarch's arm, and with stumbling feet the mother led the father to the pallet where lay the unconscious son. Four eyes strained into the sleeping face while two old hands clutched in nervous grasp.

Again outside the hut, the woman took up her argument:

"Didst see, old father, didst see?"

"Aye, that I did. How many francs think you there be?"

"Think you not that it is a sign?"

"It may well be. There is fortune to be gained."

"Our son shall again sleep in his bed and I shall be happy!"

The knotted fingers of the woman, in search of something to relieve their nervous tension, closed convulsively on the handle of a root axe that leaned against the bench.

"Look you!" she cried. "Great God hath placed the instrument here! He hath guided my hand to it! It is a miracle! It is part of my vision! He tells us how! And thou, with thy greater strength, shall bring it to pass! Take now, oh father, the axe and do the deed that God hath planned!"

The white-beard shook with strong emotion, while the shepherd hands closed on the handle of the axe. Between chattering teeth, the old man spoke:

"Surely there is strange semblance. It may well be a sign! What you say is true! Our Nickaus can come home if this be done! I see my duty! Of truth there is much to gain! Stay, and I shall go!"

And with the root axe firm clasped in strong-muscled hands and with steps that did not falter, the patriarch entered the hut.

In the misty dawn of a fresh day the white-bearded shepherd and the bent woman carried forth from the hut a heavy burden, carried it to the byre that stood behind the gnarled olive tree.

On the threshold of the hut the aged woman broke a pitcher, ancient symbol that a funeral had passed, and over the flat-pounded fresh earth in the byre she sprinkled sprigs of parsley, plant dedicated to death.

'Neath her skirt she clasped tight a cylinder of bills, made soggy where a perspiring palm had long wrapped them. The old man stood by, calmly smoking an amber-bitted pipe and stroking his silky beard with a silver mounted comb.

When the sun peeped over the mountain rim that hemmed the plateau, sending scampering the wisps of mist that hung like wraiths over the hut, came singing up the path from the hamlet, Aphrodite.

'Round her plump neck hung a necklace with a pendant of lapis and diamond. On her bosom sparkled an enameled brooch.

"*Kyrie eleison!*" she called to the trembling pair who watched her approach. "*Kyrie eleison!* Great joy! O parents! When was another day so beautiful as this? Where is the Nickaus, the rascal who hath so badly tricked us all?"

"Nickaus?" gasped the pair.

"Aye! Oh, but he hath fooled you! I see it in your eyes! Tricked his own father and mother as he said he would! Oh, such a joke!" And Aphrodite's trilling laughter rang out.

"Nickaus?" repeated the white-beard. "What mean you, girl?"

"Know you not yet? Then I have spoiled his joke? Nickaus came home last eve. He was to beg a night's lodging, and if you failed to recognize him, wait until I came this morn to..."

In an Athens asylum sit two old folk whom God in His great kindness hath given to forget. As each of the days comes with its fresh page all unshadowed for them, they greet each other:

"*Kyrie eleison!* Mayhap our Nickaus will come home to-day!"

TAINTED MONEY

BY JOHN D. SWAIN

Money is tainted by men as well as microbes; and when Joe Rivers introduces his new and unique process for tainting money, it is safe to assume that even the microbes become finicky about associating with the almighty dollar.

THE house before which the little old man paused, differed in no outward respect from others above and below it, or across the street.

Its heavy panelled door bore the numeral "41" in bronze figures. Otherwise, it was like number 43, or 39, or 139. It stood on a quiet street of opulent homes interspersed with occasional clubs, and dominated by the Gothic spire of a church three blocks below.

The silent man who opened to him, first scanned his features through a peep hole cunningly hidden from the outside and then threw the heavy guard chain.

He was barely able to read and write, this Cerberus of Number 41, but he possessed that rare gift of successful detectives, head waiters and gambling house lookouts: he never forgot a face he had once scrutinized, and the ravages of time, barbers or dissipation deceived him not. He remembered at once that the little old man had been vouched for here about six months previously, and he greeted him with his invariable "Good-evening, sir!" which was the sole remark most of the patrons had ever heard issue from his lips.

He varied the accent only, stressing "evening" to those who entered, and "good" to the speeding guest. Names never were uttered by him. By and large, he was a valuable man, worth every dollar of the three thousand he was said to draw.

The House of Chance was known, from the Gold Coast of San Francisco to its namesake of Harvard, as a resort where the elect could obtain a square deal with a square meal thrown in. Vintage wines were opened at its buffet, and vintage canvases hung upon its walls. Its guests could wander at will about the sumptuous rooms, read undisturbed the de luxe volumes from Chance's celebrated *index librorum expurgatorium*, or disport themselves in any known game from *les petits chevaux* to Old Sledge.

It is a fact that all gamblers who are able to conduct their temples of fortune with the elaborate ritual which prevailed at Billy Chance's, are reputed to be "square." Who can conceive of a crooked wheel spinning beneath a genuine Whistler?

Yet it was in this very place that old Joe Rivers, the trapper, had been neatly trimmed of his last fifty dollars.

He remembered the details vividly. He had come to town with a case of muskrat, red fox, coon and other humble skins which comprised the bulk of three month's labor, and with the proceeds of which he had started out to enliven the town, after the time honored custom of his kind.

Some man-about-town whom he had met in some place or other had conferred the doubtful favor of introducing him to Billy Chance's place. Here he had enjoyed himself as never before. If he were dead, this was the sort of place he felt he would love to go to. A genial black butler in spotless white linen had removed savory chafing covers, pressed upon him marvellous salads and imported chutneys, with bubbling wine from frosty bottles. There were trays of hors d'œuvres whose names and flavors were strange to him, steaming Mocha with pots of clotted cream, tureens of paté de foie gras and crystal bowls of Russian caviare set in cakes of ice.

After eating as much as he could, which was considerable, Rivers had dallied with

various slot games, amused himself with the little horses skimming about their miniature track beneath a glass dome, and finally drifted into a game of poker with his newfound friend, four strangers and one of Chance's cappers.

"Chance and me is both sportsmen," as Joe expressed it. "I skin muskrats, and Chance skinned me!"

It wasn't the loss of the fifty dollars, it was the coarse way in which it was done that rankled. Joe Rivers reckoned that he'd had his money's worth before he sat into the game. And he had his ticket home, with plenty of grub in the little cabin in the woods.

A jack pot it was, and a good one, with Joe's last blue in it. The winner, Chance's house man, beat out his hand with four little deuces. What hurt was that Joe had discarded a deuce in drawing. His gentle protest ignored, he had meekly announced himself as cleaned, and left the place, to sit up the remainder of the night in the railway station, waiting for the morning train back home. He hadn't even a nickel left for a cup of coffee, and it was not until he reached his little cabin late in the afternoon that he had anything to eat. However, to a trapper, this was no unusual hardship.

Ever since, in the deep silence of the woods, he had pondered how to get even. It was no problem to be solved off hand. Few men ever enjoyed such protection as did Billy Chance in his heyday. The town was wide-open, to begin with; and he paid liberal tribute to the police. The party in power lived by graft, and owned the mayor, a majority of the board of aldermen, the district attorney and enough of the local magistrates to kill any indictment short of murder, if even this reservation be granted. More than half of the leading newspapers played safe.

From time to time the clergy thundered, civic leagues organized campaigns, petitions were gotten up, complaints entered; all to drop into the bottomless well of oblivion. The mass of influential taxpayers were satisfied with a polite efficiency which nailed burglars and pickpockets and confidence men almost before they had left the train shed, a system which kept open vice segregated and left those so disposed to go as far as they pleased after closing hours, and an easy boss running municipal affairs. And Billy Chance as an institution was backed by every duly constituted authority to the limit, and patronized by the very men entrusted with the enforcement of law, and by the wealthy scions of such aristocracy as the town boasted.

Joe Rivers, poor, unknown, ignorant and without influence of any sort, intended to avenge himself against this seemingly impregnable institution; and as he was a peaceable, law abiding fellow, he proposed to do it without resort to violence. And now, his plans methodically worked out through toilsome days visiting his traps and long, still nights while he smoked his pipe before his log fire, he found himself nodding pleasantly to the doorman and trudging up the soft carpeted stairs to that upper room where he had been so crudely skinned in a game he played particularly well, but always fairly.

He affected nothing of the backwoodsman in his attire. He wore neither gaudy mackinaw nor were his trousers tucked into his boots. He had had his hair cut and his shoes shined, and was clad in a loose, dark blue serge suit, than which nothing is more anonymous. He was conspicuous in no way save that, the season being Winter, he wore no overcoat, the sheltered city two hundred miles below his hunting ground seeming mild and balmy to him.

As he entered the first room of the gambling suite, no one paid him any attention save that the floorman politely invited him to have some refreshment, which he mildly refused, and allowed that he would look about him for a bit.

More than half the men present, and they were a goodly number, were in evening clothes. There was, however, quite a sprinkling of visitors in street attire, and even two or three lumber jacks dressed to type. Billy Chance demanded two characteristics of those introduced to his place. They must have money, and they mustn't start anything. Granting these, the house was theirs. They could gamble or not, as

they chose. Against the rare contingency of a rough house, there was the suave bouncer, an ex-heavyweight wrestler. And the lookout man, who circulated with miraculous self-effacement from room to room, packed the most improved type of automatic. But no habitué had ever set eyes upon it.

Billy himself was rarely seen. He never played except with a chosen few in a private room, or with some unusually plunging prospect, but remained mostly in his cozy little office at the end of the suite, with a desk 'phone connecting by soft buzzers with all departments of his establishment. He was a man of the iron gray type of dignity. It was said of him that he would discuss Renaissance Art with a man, or shoot him dead, with equal urbanity; and this was probably true. He never indulged in profanity, and rarely in liquor.

To him, after wandering idly about for a few moments, Joe Rivers requested an attendant to conduct him; and as he was not closeted with anyone at the time, the little old trapper was at once ushered into the private office, and at Chance's courteous invitation seated himself in a beguiling leather chair by the desk.

"What is your pleasure?" asked the host, fixing him with a pair of wonderfully keen eyes beneath shaggy gray brows.

The little old man gazed back from childishly frank eyes, and smiled.

"It's this way, Mr. Chance," he said deprecatingly. "My name is Joe Rivers. Back about six months ago, on June twenty-third to be acc'rate, I was trimmed in this here place for fifty dollars. I hain't felt right about it sence, an' I come here to-night to git satisfaction!"

No change of expression crossed the gambler's face.

"Be good enough to tell me the details," he said in a soothing voice.

"Well, 'twas a game of poker; jack pots, with seven of us settin' in. I'd had a right pleasant evenin', and good treatment, an' when I was flim-flammed so raw like, it sorter soured on me. They was four deuces held against me, and one o' them same deuces I'd discarded along with a loose Queen."

"Do you recall who made up your little party?" the soothing voice requested.

"Well, they was a Smith, an' a Jones, an' a Johnson in it—them I recollect, bein' as they're easy names, sort of. Then there was a man whose name I didn't git, an' a gent name of Wallace who brought me here, an' one o' your men they called Eddie. It was him fished my deuce out o' the boneyard."

Chance passed the little man a box of Havanas, and on his refusal, selected one himself and bit off the end before replying.

"Mr. Rivers, I have a reputation worth far more to me as an asset, not to mention any moral aspect, than crookedness could ever earn for me. And yet, from time to time, gentlemen like yourself, perfectly honest in their beliefs, enter some complaint or other. It would be the easiest way to settle all such claims without question. My own disposition would lead me to do so. But just see how fatal it would be to my business! The news would spread fast; others, who had lost heavily, would attempt to recoup themselves by trumping up false charges. I should be ruined in a season! To say nothing of the fact, which must be obvious to you, that were I to settle even one such demand, it would be equivalent to an admission that unfair play is possible in my house!"

The little man continued to keep his eyes, bright as a chipmunk's, on the grave face of the speaker, with an expression of respectful interest.

"I guess likely that's so, Mr. Chance," he said. "I didn't rightly expect you'd feel like makin' it up to me, an' I dunno but what I'd feel the same way about it if I was in your shoes."

Chance nodded. "I appreciate your reasonable attitude, Mr. Rivers. To show you that I never lightly dismiss a complaint, even when made at so late a date, I am going to summon the man I think you refer to as Eddie."

He pressed a white button with a carefully manicured finger tip; and almost instantly there knocked at the door a sharp-faced lad of possibly twenty-five years, whom Rivers recognized at once.

"Eddie," questioned Chance, "do you re-

call playing jack pots with this gentleman—Wallace introduced him—on June twenty-third last?"

The sharp-faced one gimleted the old man with eyes set rather too close for comfort, and nodded.

"I don't remember just the date, but 'twas about then I guess," he admitted. "Only time I ever saw him here."

"Mr. Rivers claims that you held four deuces on the last round. Furthermore, he insists that he had discarded a deuce and a queen himself."

Eddie shook his head vigorously.

"I can't remember what I held, Mr. Chance, so long ago in such a small game. But there's nothing to his having discarded anything I did hold. Why, I was dealing myself!"

"That's all, Eddie. You may go," said his employer. When the young man had left, he turned with a smile to Rivers.

"It is the easiest thing in the world to be mistaken about a thing like that. Why, I often forget what my own discard is, and I am supposed to be a professional! It's about all an ordinary man can do to handle the cards he holds."

The trapper sighed, and shook his head.

"I played poker when you must 'a' been rolling hoops, Mr. Chance," he objected. "An' if ever it gits so I can't tell what I discarded and drew to every hand in a game, I'll quit and take up somethin' simple, like mumblety-peg. Well, I just thought I'd give ye a show! Seemed only fair, like. You've got a right hospitable place, an' I didn't want to start nothin' onless I *hed* to."

"Start anything?" repeated Chance, with a sort of deadly softness.

"Surest thing you know! I'm a peaceable man, but I'm no worm! Nobody can roll me for fifty, and no come back."

"I'm deeply sorry to have you say this, Mr. Rivers. Just what, if I may ask, do you propose to *start?*"

"I ain't tippin' my hand," said Rivers, rising to his feet. "But I aim to raise some stink about this, Mr. Chance, let me tell ye! I'm goin' to be the most expensive little he-man that ever riffled a deck in your house. Don't be alarmed! I don't pack no weapons, an' when I leave here I'm goin' right out peaceable, not sayin' a word to nobody. But you'll wish you'd got down on yer marrer bones an' *begged* me to take back the fifty you shook me down fer—and it'll be too late then!"

An angry glitter in the other's eyes, and a convulsive movement, indicated that he was tempted to break a long established rule, and lay violent hands on a guest of the house; but he restrained himself with a harshly expelled breath while Joe Rivers, without a backward glance, opened the door and walked out. Before he had crossed the room, Chance had pressed a buzzer and was whispering to the lookout to give him three minutes time, and then if he were still on the premises, to have Olaf throw him downstairs.

The little old man, passing silently through the connecting rooms, knew nothing of this arrangement, nor would he have worried if he had. It was eleven o'clock. Already, he knew, a star feature man from the *Globe* was posted on the street opposite Number 41. He had visited his old friend Clark, night city editor, before coming to Billy Chance's,—Clark who had for three years spent his vacations with him in the woods, and who had promised Joe that if the extraordinary plan he had outlined broke according to schedule, a check for a hundred would be mailed to him by the *Globe* treasurer.

Three minutes, therefore, were more than ample for the woodsman, who did not even have an overcoat to delay him. The plan, which had taken so many months to perfect, required only seconds to carry out. So contented was his smile as he sauntered towards the exit that Leonard, the lookout, followed him with a puzzled frown and wondered why the boss had given him such belligerent instructions.

Just outside the door, Joe Rivers paused, turning back to look into the main room. His hands were thrust into the pockets of his sack coat, and despite his expression of amiable interest, Leonard wondered if he could possibly be carrying a gun—and his own alert fingers closed about the stock of his own, loose in his dinner jacket.

Slowly and cautiously, the old man drew

from each pocket a pretty little kitten-like creature. They had evidently been asleep in his coat, and yawned and stretched in his hands, arching their black and white backs.

They had been reared by the trapper, who was the only human being they had ever known. Furthermore, they didn't have the slightest desire to know any others, and their delicate whiskers twitched as unfamiliar aromas smote their nostrils.

Fixing his eyes on the roulette table about which a dozen or more were gathered, the old man gently heaved his little pets through the air. One of them struck a great stack of bank notes and gold before the croupier, the other fell short and shot like a variegated streak for the open doorway leading to the room beyond.

Before a voice had been raised, Rivers had closed the door through which he had just come. It was, like all the woodwork of the place, very solid and substantial. From an inside pocket he took a wedge of new hickory, broadening out to a thick butt. Thrusting the thin edge between the door and sill, he drove it home with a tremendous kick. He knew that to open it from within it would be necessary to demolish the door, and he believed that the old doorman below, were he to come up and discover the wedge, would be unable to pluck it out without tools.

So fast had he worked that he was half way downstairs before the uproar within the gambling rooms began. He did not hurry while the doorman watched him descend. The latter, too, heard the muffled sounds above, but his instructions were to remain at his post unless summoned by the buzzer. He looked sharply at Joe Rivers, who nodded amiably as he passed out.

"Good evening, sir!" said the doorman, with the accent on "good."

"How do you know father has been gambling again?" commenced the front-page story in next morning's *Globe*. "Your *nose* knows!"

And the expression took the town by storm. When, some five minutes after Joe Rivers had gone his way, a malodorous crowd surged out of the portals of Number 41, they bore into every quarter of the city a terrific effluvia rare to urban life. In limousines, taxis, trolley cars, on foot, —into effete apartment houses, palatial hotels, humble dwellings, outraged flats, penetrated the telltale odor.

Into the slums it crept, too, through the medium of many hastily discarded and expensive suits of clothes, hats, overcoats, given away, or purchased by second hand dealers hopeful of sometime eradicating the olfactory horror from the clothes.

Into banks, shops, the hands of usurers and landlords, tax collectors and the Red Cross, by means of tainted money, went the smell of the wild, clinging even as cling the little silken threads which help authenticate bank notes.

Billy Chance, who had successfully defied law and order, decency and morality, succumbed to the unbeaten champion, ridicule. In club and smoker, in lobby and on street corner, wherever men foregathered, somebody was sure to sniff suspiciously and to ask, "Do I smell something?" Ribald youths gathered before Number 41 at night, and when anyone passed in or out, the cry "Wood Pussie!" was raised, and noses ostentatiously held.

Chance died hard. He obtained a renumbering of his side of the street, whereby "41" was conferred upon an outraged curate. He opened for business in time, his rooms renovated and redolent of heavy Oriental perfumes. And he got some trade, in the aggregate a good deal, especially from transients. But the expenses of such a place as he maintained were tremendous. They could not stand even a thirty per cent reduction in receipts, and he suffered at least twice that.

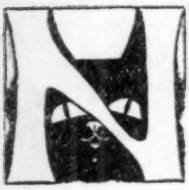
There came a day when moving vans stood before his door, and famous paintings, crated chairs and tables, rolls of Persian rugs, were swallowed within their maws. Billy Chance himself walked slowly down the steps and entered a waiting car, to be driven to the station, an exile. And the old doorman, left behind for a few last details, closed the door upon him, his eyes sadly downcast.

"Good evening, sir!" he whispered, with the accent on "good."

THE LAND TURTLE

BY EDWARD HARRY HAUENSTEIN

The Land Turtle is an ancient motor car, with all the cranky habits and disgusting vices that old cars have. It passes through a baptism of fire and water and, though it fails to negotiate a ditch, it justifies the owner's faith in it.



NO one in Sheron realized the significance of the event when Joe Norton's old Land Turtle received its baptism of flame—except Norton himself.

The Land Turtle was a flivver of ancient origin, a cross between a lightning bug and a trench tank, suggesting the former more in point of size rather than in speed or in beauty of design, while its claim of resemblance to the latter was solely that of lung power.

On the day that the Land Turtle took fire in front of Norton's place of abode, while the owner was engaged in his accustomed practice of warming up the engine's vitals by lighting a gasoline-saturated corncob beneath its tummy, one thoughtful neighbor, who had long endured in patience the window-shaking uproar which always developed gradually into hurricane fire until Norton threw in the clutch, bungled long enough while making a hose connection to be sure in his own mind that the fire had done its work.

When the blaze was conquered, the bus was a sorry wreck. The woodwork and upholstering, which for years had been exposed to the sun and rain in summer, and to frost and snow in winter, was mostly a blackened, charred mass, while the metal parts assumed that rust-tint that comes only when water and fire clash, with iron as the battlefield.

"Will she go?" Norton asked as he gazed solemnly at what was left of the Land Turtle.

"Go!" exclaimed Jack Shaffer, the neighbor, who had made two bites of the cherry when he coupled the hose, "you don't expect any more mileage out of that remnant, do you?"

"Oh, mebby. She ought to be warmed up now."

The crank was still so hot that Norton had to use his ample red handkerchief to turn her over. But there was a response.

The engine sputtered and clattered away with seemingly renewed vigor. Norton climbed ponderously aboard, his weight threatening to crush the vehicle to earth, manipulated his levers, and was off down street, journeying as noiselessly as a freight train.

"You must never give up too soon," he hurled back at the astonished Shaffer.

WHEN the county commissioners had awarded a contract to Joseph G. Norton to improve, by paving with brick, a six-mile stretch of the Lincoln Highway in Ripley county, all of Sheron's five thousand inhabitants had rejoiced.

When Norton made his first appearance in Sheron, those of its populace who gazed upon him and his Land Turtle had a rude shock. Enthusiasm dropped, stock-market-like, to despair; then, after the first grand plump-down, rallied somewhat, and rested at the stage of hope. "Joseph G. Norton" was an appellation that didn't fit this man. He needed a more suitable handle, and they found it immediately. He became Old Joe Norton. They had expected a hustling contractor, but Norton was just a plodding old man.

His clothes, like his automobile, showed the effects of long exposure to the weather, and there was every reason to believe that the human frame within would collapse some day soon. He mirrored the hard life through which his business had taken him. Bets were made at even money on whether

the Land Turtle would bear the label, "estate of the late Joseph G. Norton," or whether Norton would live to mourn the permanent departure of his long-faithful conveyance.

Norton was a human wreck when he struck Sheron, and a year of hard luck hadn't improved him. Yet he plugged along with a dogged tenacity and kept from falling over the ragged edge of bankruptcy.

Originally he had agreed to complete his contract in six months. On the day his car took fire, he had been granted his second extension of time. Sheron people were more than anxious to have the road-paving job finished; for the gap Norton was closing was the only missing link in the paved road chain extending east to the big city, and beyond even to New York itself. The commissioners, however, could not see how taking the contract from Norton, on the grounds of failure to comply, would help out in any way.

In a year, Old Joe had built two of the six miles of brick paved road. It was getting well into the summer now, and the third mile was only a little more than started. The county board called Norton in to prod him on a little faster.

"I'm hurryin' all I can, and I'll get her done this year sure," the contractor assured the commissioners.

"Now, Joe, that's what you tell us every time we get you in here," snapped Jim Smith, president and spokesman of the board. "That's an old story. You've got to do better than that, or we'll give your contract to someone who will get the work done."

"Now listen, men," Joe entreated, "I just got things goin' good now. You know we've had a bad spring and farmers have been back in their work. They're givin' me some teams now. We done a lot of gradin' last week. If the sun keeps shinin' we'll get the third mile of brick laid by Saturday. It won't take long to finish the job if we can just keep goin'."

But Norton didn't "keep goin'" long. Prices were mounting steadily, and the firms with whom he had contracted for cement, and gravel and sand, left him in the lurch. His bondsmen began to press him hard. Norton kept things moving slowly, however, and just managed to climb over each new crisis. He pacified his bondsmen and made new contracts for material.

Then his men struck for higher wages. He had been paying them for full time steadily, even when the lack of material caused layoffs of one or two days each week.

"I'll fix them ungrateful cusses," he declared, with a show of anger foreign to his plugging disposition. "I'll get a gang of blacks here."

He made good. The negroes, fifty strong, came by train from Cincinnati and attracted a lot of attention because they were the first southern negro laborers ever employed in Ripley county. The dirt on the paving job fairly flew. Norton was in good spirits again, for the end was in sight.

But the first pay day brought about a new change. Anxious to try an experiment, one white man who had not departed with the strikers, seeing an opportunity for a substantial net profit, attempted to do the impossible—mix whiskey and niggers with Sunday-school results. The mixing part went into effect on schedule time and with machine-like precision. The results turned up several hours later. When the sheriff and his deputies reached the scene they called the undertakers and the doctors. The division of spoils was about equal. Norton was again without a working force.

The harvest season was over, however, and scores of men who had been garnering the sheaves of $2.20 wheat in the fields of the great West were floating back east again. Norton picked from freight trains every man who would consider a job with a shovel, and within the week he assembled a new crew.

And then, for the first time, he became aware of the recurrence of the war-time railroad tie-up. Gravel and cement, the yardmasters told him, could not be classed as foodstuffs, the only commodities outside of those O. K'd by the government priority committee which had precedence in freight movements. His material could not be

delivered, perhaps for several weeks.

The news of Norton's latest misfortune quickly came to the attention of Sheron's business men. The town's leaders held a conference with the county commissioners, and on the same afternoon a committee was sent to the scene of the road paving. Norton's gang of erstwhile harvesters was still at work, and although the supply of gravel on hand would be exhausted in twenty-four hours, Norton did not seem perturbed.

"How are you going to keep your men in material after that's gone?" asked Smith, the commissioner, who accompanied the committee. His finger designated a rapidly dwindling pile of gravel at the roadside.

"I dunno," was the frank reply.

"What are you going to do?"

"The best I can, men. I'll get her done, and this year, too, as I told you before."

"Now look here, Joe,"—Smith was in real earnest—"this road paving has been delayed as long as our board will stand it. The people of Sheron and of Ripley county are sick and tired of your excuses. This three-mile strip of dirt road is the only unimproved section from here clear to Pittsburg on this great national highway. When it is paved, our automobiles can travel, winter or summer, to any of the big cities of the east, and the farmers all through here, can go to Sheron, mud or no mud. It means a lot to us, and to them."

"But I can't git no gravel right now."

"You've got to get it, man. This road, dedicated to the memory of the immortal Lincoln, planned to assist the nation in its present military crisis, must be built clear across the country. It will be a great avenue for the motor truck or the touring car, and Ripley county cannot afford to be pointed out by the big guns of the city as the jumping off place on the earth—the end of the auto road."

"Now listen, just a minute, Smith. Your big car, in which you brung this committee of five out here, gets over the ground in pretty good shape. My Land Turtle here don't go quite so fast, but she gets there. Guess we're a little like our cars. I'm not goin' so fast, but I'll arrive before winter.

"But winter's only two months away," protested Smith.

"I know, but this luck can't keep up, always. 'Member the day my Land Turtle nearly burned up? Shaffer, there, he seen it. Well, she's been runnin' like a demonstratin' sample ever since. I've got to the turn of the road, too. Right here, where she bends and steers straight for Sheron, is where my hard luck gets lost."

Threats, entreaty, coaxing, all failed to bring any response from Old Joe. He was sure he would finish the job, while judging from his work in the past and viewing the obstacles ahead of him, the committee was convinced he had just about as much chance to finish the job before winter as the Land Turtle, with two tires punctured and no corncobs, would have to win a race from Smith's car on a ten-mile stretch.

The committee did, however, succeed in getting Norton to consent to receiving aid from a citizens' committee, in the way of trying to speed up the shipments of material.

Local railroad agents were summoned before an evening conference, but even appeals to their pride failed to squeeze from their meager brains any feasible plan to get gravel over the forty-mile haul from Granger. The other matters relating to the progress of the work were in good shape. Norton had solved the labor problem himself. Hoffing, the dealer in builders' supplies, had a big consignment of cement on hand and anticipated no difficulty in supplying the remainder. The brick were made at a plant within easy motor-truck haul from the Lincoln Highway.

But gravel! There lay the real difficulty. The biggest available supply was at the hospital, where Doctor Cuttem operated for gallstones; and while there was a lot of local pride in Sheron, it had not reached the pinnacle of patriotism where a sufficient number of sober citizens were willing to offer themselves as sacrifices to the doctor's well-whetted knife, on the slim chance that within them might be found a sufficient quantity of pebbles of the required physical measurements to mix with concrete for a road foundation.

It was raining when the committee

adjourned at eleven P. M., with the gravel question still unsolved. The steady fall of *aqua pura* was still in progress next morning when Old Joe Norton turned the cushion on the seat of the Land Turtle upside down and settled himself on the dry side to drive out to the scene of road paving operations.

He didn't expect that his workmen would do anything, but his plodding nature disregarded ordinary activities of the elements. In the course of time the Land Turtle snorted into the water-soaked camp by the roadside. The men were grumbling in their tents.

"This is the first day of October, boss. Winter's here. Let's finish next spring," greeted Jim Boone, one who had come from the Kansas wheat fields.

"We're going to finish this fall," returned Norton emphatically. "This'll blow over in a day or two, and we got two good months ahead."

Discontent was manifest in all quarters. But the men knew that with sufficient provocation, Old Joe could get vicious, and his rejoinder to Boone's suggestion had been so positive that none dared take a chance on getting the old man riled.

The rain came faster. Miniature rivers were soon washing their own channels in the soft earth around the camp, while in the newly graded roadway, down the hill around the bend—the last bend on the road to Sheron—two big streams of yellow fluid were gouging channels far below the deepest excavation line marked out by the surveyor. The grading on the hill, preliminary to the concrete foundation, had just been completed.

"Looks like we'll have some fillin' to do when the rain's over," remarked Norton.

By noon the valley below was a surging flood, dimly visible through the foggy atmosphere and unceasing rain. The men in camp placed everything on benches above the danger zone and settled down to sleep with the early coming of darkness, while the wind jerked at the soaked tent flaps and the falling fluid sought out every crevice to make its work complete.

Norton, stopped for once by the fierceness of a storm, bunked in the camp.

Morning found the storm routed. The stream in the valley was still far over its banks, but the rain was over. Up the Big Bend hill the two canyons torn out by the rushing current were so deep and wide that at places they were merged into one, extending the full width of the cut. The depth of the engineer's cut on the hillside had been doubled.

"Mebby the Land Turtle can get through, though," Norton remarked to his foreman. "I want to go to Sheron to see Smith."

"Through there? Never!" replied the foreman.

"Watch us go up," chuckled Norton. "I must get to town. Mebbe that fine-haired committee has found some gravel for me."

He picked at random a soaked corncob from the tool box, swished it through the air to eradicate the excess water, poured on a liberal quantity of gasoline, placed it under the engine and applied a match. He watched it burn, slowly, the blue flame sending its warmth up through the engine's parts. Then he tossed the burned cob into the gutter, cranked the engine and started his journey.

The old boat struggled bravely up the narrow path between the two deep cuts, dipped down out of sight once to negotiate a big washout, but came up again. Then the car stopped, and one side settled down close to the roadway. As the men watched from camp, the Land Turtle slipped over into the ditch. They made their way to Norton. The car was down in the cavern.

"I think we can turn her over, and by shovelin' out a little here at the back, run her up the hill in the ditch. Get a shovel," Norton directed.

Old Joe took the implement himself and put his foot on the hilt.

There was a grinding crunch as the steel blade sank into the strata.

Norton looked up at his watchers, amazed. Their glances, too, betrayed surprise.

The old contractor lifted the shovel full of earth and dumped it on a pile. He picked some of it up in his hand. He rubbed it and let it sift through his fingers.

"Gravel, boys, a whole hill full of it," he shouted.

SOME JOKE

BY GEORGE L. CATTON

Fifteen years of working together cements a friendship between two old men that is as sacred as the Monroe Doctrine and as exclusive as a close corporation. Nothing could dissolve that partnership except death, special legislation, or Billy Todd.

LD Bob Farrell and old Jim Tuttle were pals, had been pals for fifteen years.

When the first long shriek of the Inside Passage boat's whistle echoed up to and died away among the hills behind him, old Bob Farrell's dreamy eyes left the dim south horizon and traveled back across the bay to the camp below him. He cleared his throat hoarsely—warningly.

"I've been athinkin', Jim," he announced whimsically.

Over on the other side of the cabin door old Jim Tuttle reached for his knife and tobacco and answered huskily:

"So've I, Bob."

"There's ten ounces in the poke, Jim," old Bob went on, "an' we ain't more'n half way thru the dump yit."

Old Jim finished filling the worn old pipe and held it out by the bowl.

"An' some day," he grinned childishly, "some day there's goin' to be twenty ounces in that poke when one of them there boats comes in."

Old Bob accepted the filled pipe.

"Right," he nodded. And the conversation was ended.

And down on the bay "The Joker"—Billy Todd—went aboard the Inside Passage boat, chuckling softly to himself.

The Joker was going out. Down in Seattle the dance halls and the girls, the pool and the poker tables, the movie and the burlesque theatres were waiting for him; waiting for him and the fifty thousand dollars that less than a year of pure cheechako's luck had crammed into his pockets. But he wasn't thinking of what he was going to do. The boat was in the bay; and till it passed thru the Gap and headed south, the Joker's thoughts would be of what he was leaving. He was chuckling over his last Alaska joke.

That was some joke!

Old Bob Farrell and old Jim Tuttle were pals, had long been pals. The first Klondike rush had thrown them together, middle-aged men then; and fifteen years later, the day the Joker went aboard the Inside Passage boat, they were still pals. Privation, exposure, and eternal hope that never materialized had twisted and gnarled the rugged frames of them, warped and deadened the minds of them; but the first friendship still held, the first agreement still maintained.

Half and half—that had been the first agreement: half the grub and half the blankets, half the work and half the find. And all the body and mind destroying hell of that fifteen years of profitless prospecting in the land that God forgot had failed to change that agreement in any particular. Side by side, old Bob and old Jim were working the tailings of the one abandoned mine of the camp—the dump of the "First Strike." They were sleeping in the same bunk, smoking alternately the same worn old pipe, adding week after week the pitifully tiny, hard-earned result of their joint slavery to the one little bag in the jam crock on the shelf. And everybody in the camp knew them, smiled to them, and called them "The Siamese Twins."

And every time a down boat whistled its arrival, old Bob would clear his throat, warning old Jim that he was going to break in on the habitual silence, and say:

"I've been athinkin', Jim."

And old Jim would answer: "So've I, Bob."

There were ten ounces in their little poke that day, the day the Joker went aboard the Inside Passage boat. But, though ten ounces would pay the passage out for one of them, it never occurred to either of them that one could go. Fifteen years of constant companionship through the hell of it all had ground a permanent rut. For fifteen years their "half and half" policy had endured. Half of the poke, five of those ten ounces, belonged to Bob; five belonged to Jim. Some day, some day there were going to be twenty ounces in the poke when—"when one of them there boats comes in." Some day.

But old Bob and old Jim didn't go out together.

The morning the boat carrying the Joker passed through the Gap, old Bob awoke to find himself alone in the bunk, the boat gone from the bay, and a note pinned to his coat. Old Jim had gone out. The partnership, that long, unbroken fifteen years of companionship, was ended.

Old Bob walked out of the cabin. And he never entered it again.

Old Bob caught the next boat down. Killing his pride of independence, old Bob accepted from the lucky old-timers the long proffered passage out. He was going after old Jim. A month to the day after old Jim pinned the note to old Bob's coat, old Bob landed in Seattle and began his search.

But he couldn't find old Jim.

Old Bob walked the streets for endless hours, singling out the face of every old man that passed him by. He haunted the water front for weeks, visiting every boarding house and saloon. He searched every place that he, in his fading mind, could imagine old Jim would be likely to be found. But he couldn't find old Jim. And the precarious existence that he eked out on the meagre remuneration from such odd jobs as would be offered to a decrepit old man like himself, sapped what little remained of his spent vitality.

Then one night, tottering, his eyes dimming, old Bob entered a place he had never been in before. The crowd was going in. The deep notes of a pipe organ floated out to the street. Old Jim was fond of music, maybe he would be in there. Tho' it cost him his last coin at the door, old Bob paid it and passed inside.

And he found old Jim.

Old Jim left Alaska on the same boat that carried the Joker—Billy Todd. It was a "good sport," the intoxicated fancy of a good sport, that paid old Jim's passage out.

For two days, while he waited for the Inside Passage boat, the good sport had been scattering his money and coaxing old Jim to "come along." He had taken quite a liking to old Jim. But up to the hour of sailing old Jim had refused flatly even to think of it. Then at the last moment the good sport and old Jim were rowed out to the boat—both drunk.

Nor did the good sport stop with the purchase of old Jim's passage out. Handfuls of gold bought other passages—cabins always. Rolls of bills paid for railtrips—observation-car suites. They left a trail of empty bottles clear down the coast. Then the good sport sobered back to his own natural, dirty self and turned old Jim loose, without a penny, in Los Angeles.

And up the coast, in Seattle, another "good sport," the Joker—Billy Todd,—was throwing fifty thousand dollars to the vultures, and relating to them the full particulars of his last Alaska joke.

That was some joke!

When old Jim found himself without a cent on the streets of Los Angeles he went to work. The Anglo-American Photoplay Company was filming an Alaska mining town drama and needed extras. Old Jim's long white hair, his garb, his whole appearance just filled their requirements.

Three days after old Jim found himself in Los Angeles, he was on the trail again. He was one of the sourdoughs in a photoplay Alaska stampede.

Old Jim staggered along the built-up trail. He didn't need orders or directions for that. In his place in the line of costumed stampeders he struggled up the hill and swung to the right, into the center of the scene. Then he stopped.

The director screamed at him. The orders were to keep moving and not to look at the camera. But—Death knows

nothing about orders or directors.

Old Jim was finished. When he left Alaska, fifteen years of privation and exposure and eternal hopes that never materialized were riding his heart, and the protracted spree that had brought him to Los Angeles finished it. Old Jim died on the trail.

Squarely in the center of the scene old Jim stopped. He turned to the left and staggered out of the line. With staring eyes that saw nothing, with both hands before him as if in supplication, old Jim faced the camera, took three tottering steps and pitched forward on his face.

The director turned old Jim over. He stopped cursing. Everyone took off his hat.

Then because it had been done naturally, and because such things do sometimes happen in a stampede, and because film costs money, that incident, just as it happened, went out with the release.

And three weeks later, two months after old Jim had left that note pinned to old Bob's coat, that film was shown in Seattle.

It was an extensively advertised film. The movie-theatre that showed it was crowded the first night. And that first-night crowd was treated to an incident which was not on the program.

The stampede scene was in the second reel.

The long line of stampeders climbed the hill on the right and swung across the screen. Half the line passed. Then one of the stampeders stopped. Squarely in the middle of the screen an old, white-haired man stopped short in the trail and faced—the crowd in the seats.

Years of theatre going had taught the picture fans not to expect a screen character to look down on them—except on very special occasions.

Down in front one of the crowd, an old white-haired man, stood up. He tottered to his feet. He held up his hand. He called:

"Jim!"

The eyes of the crowd flashed to the screen.

The old white-haired stampeder in the picture threw out his arms. He left the trail. He staggered forward toward the crowd.

The eyes of the crowd shifted back.

The old white-haired man down in front held out his arms.

"I didn't take it, Jim!" he called pleadingly. "Half of it was yours, Jim! Half of it—"

The old stampeder on the screen pitched forward on his face.

Down in front the tired voice of the old man faded out. His arms dropped to his side. He sighed and fell back across the seats.

Old Bob Farrell and old Jim Tuttle were pals again.

And a few doors down the street, in a cafe, The Joker—Billy Todd—was relating to one of the girls the closing details of his last Alaska joke.

"I found their poke in an old jam crock on a shelf," he chuckled. "I was going to slip the old guys their passage out, but neither of them was in the cabin. So when I found their poke I crammed five hundred into the little bag and hid it under the bunk."

"Huh!" the girl snorted. "Where's the joke tuh that?"

The Joker drained his glass.

"Why," he grinned, "when them two old guys missed their poke they'd blame each other for taking it—nobody else would steal it. Then there'd be a row—a whale of a row! See the joke now?.... Some joke, kid! Some joke!"

FOR MAY: THE CREDITORS' MEETING *by E. A. Kirkwood,* the story of a young fellow who gets into debt and out of a job and begins to avoid his friends.

THREE OF THE THIRD

BY FREDERICK FERDINAND MOORE

When Kerrigan goes to take the fatal third relief on Post Three, H troop wonders if he will be brought back whole, on a stretcher, or à la carte, in a tin rice boiler. Kerrigan decides to walk back.

ERRIGAN knew that the fatal post and relief had fallen to him —Post Number Three of the third relief. He would be the sentry on duty from midnight until two o'clock and would have to patrol the trail which led into camp through the dreaded jungle.

Four men had already been brought into camp, shapeless masses of flesh and bones, from that post. They had been cut up in the trail. A Moro with a double-edged, twisted creese, is an artist at killing, but he mars his work by overdoing it. A dead man prefers to be found in one place, but a Moro—well, the simple act of slaying does not satisfy a Moro.

Kerrigan felt every eye in the guard detail turn to him in sympathy as the sergeant named him as the sentry on Post Number Three for the third relief. That was when the Moro was accustomed to do his work.

The sergeant watched Kerrigan out of the corner of his eye as he pronounced the words which he felt were sending the soldier to certain death, but Kerrigan never flinched. In the morning he had helped bring in from that post what had been his "bunkie." The tin rice boiler creaked and complained from the load, and every step of the way Kerrigan swore vengeance—softly, and through locked teeth, as a man does when he means what he says.

There was a rumor in the troop that Kerrigan had asked to be detailed for guard, and was going to volunteer to take the third relief, but the first sergeant refused to discuss the matter.

In fact, the whole affair was tabooed in camp. The commanding officer refused to take any action to prevent the killing of his men. He could have ordered the guard doubled on that post and had two men stand the watch, but there was no reason why the boloman would not transfer his attentions to some other post. To acknowledge that Post Number Three was more dangerous than any other post would cause a panic among the men. The troop was facing a crisis, and officers and men knew it. They had to do their duty, they had to walk that post, they had to bring in what they found in the trail or be brought in themselves. They were soldiers, and that was soldiering.

That afternoon Kerrigan sat around in the guard room and smoked and polished his rifle barrel—inside. He filled his belt with cartridges and examined each one carefully. He oiled the mechanism of the magazine and sought for dust in the grooves and dusted each part carefully.

When mess call for supper sounded he went to barracks and arranged his things in his locker. He made several little bundles and wrote a name on each bundle. He wrote a letter and put it in his locker and called Trumpeter Graydon.

"I wish you would keep the key of my locker to-night, Trump. I'm on guard—Three of the Third." He smiled calmly and handed over the key. Graydon did not dare to look in his face, but he shook Kerrigan's hand as he took the key.

"Oh," said Kerrigan, suddenly, as if the thought had come to him at that minute, "I think you blow Taps prettier than any other trumpeter in the regiment. Now, if I was to pass in my checks in the army, I would be happy if I could know that you were going to blow Taps over me when they fire the volleys."

"There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you, Kerrigan—come on to the mess hall and get your chow."

The troop was at supper in the rude native building which served as kitchen and dining-room when Kerrigan and Graydon went in. The chatter ceased as Kerrigan sat down, and he knew that every man in the troop was watching him.

"Oh, Kerrigan!" said the sadler, who lived at the stables and did not know what the others did, "the ice boat will be in from Manila in the morning and those boxing gloves will come. You want to be—"

The quartermaster-sergeant kicked the saddler under the table.

"Say, what's the matter with you? Gone loco?" demanded the saddler, fighting mad in an instant.

The quartermaster-sergeant whispered in his ear and the saddler dropped his eyes to his plate and attacked the stew. If Kerrigan had not been there the troop would have pitched the saddler through the window.

"I'll be down to-morrow afternoon and box you ten rounds," said Kerrigan, and everybody laughed, or started to, for they were not quite sure they ought to laugh.

Kerrigan ate but little, and felt that his presence was casting a gloom over the men. He knew they wanted to talk about him and what was before him, just as he had talked about the others who had been on the jungle post.

He got up from the long table and walked to the door, rolling a cigarette as he went. At the door he stopped and turned suddenly. Every man, looking at him, saw by the light of the cocoanut-oil lamps that he was pale.

He looked down the long table and saw the men who had fought with him through the Philippine campaign—the men who were left. The cook was standing in the door of the kitchen, and the kitchen police were making a show at serving the tables. They were all looking at Kerrigan and felt that he had eaten his last meal in the troop.

It was as if an audience waited to hear some great man speak. Kerrigan leaned over to the smoking lamp and lit his cigarette. His lips trembled and the cigarette fell to the floor. He picked it up and lit it again, this time with his teeth clinched, and they saw the muscle on his jaw standing out as he turned his profile.

He hitched up his cartridge belt and pulled on his gauntlets.

"Boys," he said, "I've soldiered in a good many outfits in this Yankee Doodle army, but H troop of the Second Cavalry is the best troop in the whole outfit."

He went out and they watched him through the windows as he crossed the parade ground to the guard house in the dim afterglow of the tropical sunset. The supper was tasteless and the conversation lagged.

A recruit left the table and began to whistle softly before he was out of the mess hall. The first sergeant reprimanded him sharply, and the men did not know which one to thank most—the sergeant or the recruit.

"Number One—twelve o'clock."

The corporal of the relief roused himself as he heard the sentry at the guard house call midnight. He listened to the various outposts sending back their "All is well," and then called the relief.

Kerrigan was lying on his back on his cot with his hands folded across his breast and his hat over his face. The corporal shivered as he thought how like a dead man the sleeping soldier looked in the ghastly light.

He felt like an executioner calling a condemned man as he touched the sleeping figure. Kerrigan rubbed his eyes and sprang to his feet. He took a long drink from the can of distilled water, dashed the tepid stuff in his face and fell into the waiting line.

Outside the night was black. They could hear the pulse of the ocean beating on the beach. A lizard was croaking dolefully from a banyan tree and, as they plunged into the jungle, unseen things rustled in the foliage, reptiles glided away and insects chirped shrilly. The air was warm and heavy with the scent of decaying vegetation, blossoms, and the fever-fog rising out of the ground.

Three of the Second halted them in the

trail and Kerrigan received the special orders of the post. The relief marched away silently, cursing the discipline which prevented them from staying with Kerrigan and waiting for the fiend with the creese.

Kerrigan moved up the trail and stopped. He took his carbine from his shoulder and held it ready for instant use. The hammer was back and the safety notch turned off. He opened the case of his watch and put his finger on the works to stop it.

After waiting until he had become accustomed to the usual sounds of the jungle, he coughed. It was an innocent little cough that did not disturb the silence. A man twenty feet away could not have sworn which direction it came from—unless he happened to be a keen-eared Moro.

Kerrigan waited several minutes and then he heard a slight rustle in the bamboo trees behind him. He had his finger on the trigger and he smiled in the darkness, but he did not turn toward the sound until he coughed again. He got on one knee and put the muzzle of the carbine down low, for crawling things are near the ground.

The rustle came again, in the same direction, but perhaps a foot nearer. Kerrigan estimated it to be ten feet away. He coughed again after a short time. It was an encouraging sort of cough, or should be to a Moro with a creese.

Again he heard the leaves move. The vines grated against something which was gliding between them. It was progressing slowly. It consumed a minute in moving an inch, until it made one long continuous rustle, scarcely to be heard, as the slight noise blended with the little night sounds of the jungle.

The noise stopped. Had Private Kerrigan fallen asleep on his post? There had been a stifled yawn and then a peaceful, gentle snore, followed by the regular, deep breathing of a weary man asleep. At intervals there was a soft snore.

The vines moved again, and now the Thing was bolder, but still cautious. Foot by foot it glided nearer, growing more confident at each snore. Then the noise stopped. The creese was being made ready. It was the instant before the Thing strikes.

Kerrigan snuggled the butt of his carbine under his cheek, so gently that the movement was a caress. His eyes were of no use in aiming—his ears were guiding the carbine sight. Every muscle and nerve was so tense that it seemed they would snap. Great marbles of perspiration grew on his forehead, to break and run down into his eyes, but he did not mind them.

He was glad the troop could not see him, for he feared they might think he was afraid. All he feared was failure. He was trying to do his duty, and that was of more value to him than his life. A wave of gladness came over him as he realized that he had faced this Thing in the dark and was not afraid. He had never known before that he was absolutely fearless. He hoped that he might live so as to be able to enjoy the knowledge. Then he pulled the trigger.

There was no report. The carbine was still in his hands and he had pulled the trigger. He wondered if he had been mistaken. He pressed the steel again and it did not move.

A thousand little needles pricked his spine. His hair sprang up and quivered like a million tiny wires under a powerful magnet. His whole body was galvanized with fear. He was afraid now. He felt himself growing sick. He was unable to think. It did not occur to him that there must be some reason his carbine did not answer his pressure. All he knew was that he was helpless and that the Thing was before him preparing to strike. He wondered if the others had found themselves in the same plight. He had thought nothing could make him afraid, and he was sick from fright. A great lump rose in his throat and his frame quivered in a great, silent sob—because he was afraid.

The rustle came again. The fear vanished. He suddenly understood what was wrong. The safety notch! He had thought it open. It was closed.

He snapped it back and pulled the trigger. He saw the jungle open before him in the powder flash and a black shape almost at the muzzle of the carbine, prone before him. He caught the reflection of the fire which leaped from his gun, on a long, snaky bit of steel, pointed toward

him. He fired again and again until his magazine was empty and then he tossed cartridges into the chamber in feverish haste and fired until his fingers were burned on the hot barrel.

He heard the other sentinels calling the corporal of the guard and "Boots and Saddles" sounding in the camp. He wondered why there was so much blowing of trumpets and shooting. He laughed at them and kept on firing.

When the guard reached him his ammunition was all gone and he was sitting in the trail laughing and sucking his burned fingers. They held the lantern in his face and he laughed at the flame and whispered to it, "I was afraid—I was afraid!"

"Hell!" said the sergeant of the guard. "What's the matter with him? Is his hair white, or am I loco?"

Kerrigan's hair was tinged with white. They picked him up, soothed him, and led him into the post, but still he laughed.

They found the naked form in the grass near where Kerrigan had been sitting. It was full of bullets.

In a few days Kerrigan was better, except that his hair did not turn black again.

The creese hangs over his bunk in barracks.

The Black Cat Club

(Continued from page 2)

fiction rather than real life. The characters are of the blasé, I-know-the-world-because-I've-lived type. The thread of fickleness is clearly visible as it runs through the entire fabric of the story. Yet the wicked Judas and the alluring Salome are likeable characters—matrimonial gamblers, willing to take a third chance. A noticeable feature is that the characterization is done entirely by dialogue. The scene at the city hall is amusing and cleverly handled up to a certain point, but the explanation of the telegram comes as an anti-climax. Because it is not woven into the story, it has the effect of being tacked on as an afterthought. Nor is the reader convinced. It is not plausible that the self-engrossed Ferdie, otherwise the King, would have sufficient imagination to send such a wire. As the reporter says, it is a good story after it unfolds its various details, and therein lies its charm. Then it slides gracefully down hill to the "elaborately trimmed," etc.

Efficiency—Plus and Minus presents the horrible case of a dictomaniac whose concentration has led to a lopsided development of the purely mental. His emotional faculties are atrophied to such an extent that he is unfitted for social intercourse with his associates. As a farce, the story is not altogether lacking in probability of plot, since the character of Bert Williams is so convincingly drawn. Granted such a man, his method becomes almost logical, although the author probably worked backwards from the notion of a proposal by dictaphone to the creation of a character plausible enough to resort to such a device, together with an inciting motive for his doing so. The letter itself is beyond criticism, even to its unindented address. The reader has no cause to doubt the "plus" efficiency of the assistant technical manager, but in one instance a sneaking suspicion that his "minus" efficiency has been overdrawn crops out and will not down. It is when "Bert kissed her goodnight and departed." Now, when a couple arrives at the kissing stage, few words are necessary for the betrothal. But not one bar does the author see fit to let down so that his bird-mouthed hero can hop into the clover patch of love talk. One wonders what "the most radiant creature that ever lived on Detroit's Elizabeth Street" could have seen in a person whose timidity was so out of proportion to his commercial capacity. She could have purchased a phonograph for one dollar down and a dollar a week.

What interest *The Wedding Business* possesses depends largely upon the novelty of the plot material and the slapstick situation which is evolved therefrom. The author has violated short-story technique by creating too many roles of equal importance. Where there are so many persons to keep track of, the result is confusion to the reader's mind. One good point is that the characters are all within focus at the dénouement, and are snapped in one picture. This helps toward clarity, but the fact remains that the appeal of the story is lessened because the author's technique is inadequate compared to his originality of plot conception.

Smith's Wife is another farce which has

about it an air of plausibility, due to good characterization. By careful attention to detail, the author keeps the reader right with the victims in the story, as gullible as they are, and only sensing the situation when they do. This has the effect of helping one to believe that the two simple minded miners are not so much to blame after all in yielding to the blandishments of the adventuress who capitalizes their bibulous failings and their weakness for pie. The comedy is well played, and the only unsatisfactory point is that the question "Did they get the pie?" is left for the reader to answer.

The Kiser Construction Company, as a satire on the present world conflict, is something new in war stories. The story in itself is made of clever comedy and of skillfully woven characters from the world. It outlines the situation and situations from the beginning of the war to the present day, and the author then takes a "crack" at foretelling the end. The story gives in detail, if closely studied, the whole of the Kaiser's position, from the condition of his family to his worries over soldiers. It relates his successes at first, then the commencement of the end, with each battle and its outcome. At first thought, the "color" attempted in introducing the narrator seems to be wasted endeavor; but it is important to remember that Tolstoi, to whom the eating-house story teller is compared, made a prophecy about the present war. The story teller does likewise. The parallel goes back to the point where he states the theme of his tale. "This war was caused by ambition. A little of it is all right, but too much of it isn't, especially of the wrong kind." The value of the story lies in its unique conception. It has defects of action that are confusing, but as a whole is a pleasing bit of comedy. And not the least of its virtues is that it satirizes building trade methods as well as German egotism.

Though *Heel Marks of a Hero* is obviously an enlarged anecdote of "mistaken identity," the midshipman's adventure with his cobra is thrilling enough while it lasts, and seems very real because the author has so carefully described the boy's thoughts and feelings. The introduction is somewhat long, though it deals with interesting matter, not altogether extraneous to the story because it helps to explain what a boy the hero really is, for all his experience.

SEVERAL club members in the western states have complained that they do not get their copies of the BLACK CAT until late in the month, due to the hold-up of mail trains because of traffic congestion, and are therefore unable to get their criticisms into the mail until almost time for the monthly contest to close. To give all members an equal opportunity to compete, it has been thought best to extend the date for the closing of the contests to the tenth of the month following the date of publication.

The seventeenth contest comprises the stories in this issue, (April); and all lists must be received at the office of the BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before May 10th. Prizes will be awarded May 15th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the July BLACK CAT; issued June 15th.

A PRIZE of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

A PRIZE of $10 will be awarded to the member sending in the best criticism.

A PRIZE of $5 will be awarded to the member sending in the next best criticism.

PRIZES of $2.50 EACH will be awarded to members whose criticisms rank third and fourth in the contest.

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